Intimating a Female Archive:

Rendering the Wounds of Family Trauma

By

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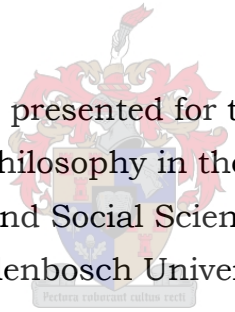

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work; that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated); that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

This dissertation comprises both a practice-led artist's book which inventively engages the notion of a female family archive, and a substantial research component which theoretically unpacks questions of femaleness, family, archive, and creative practice with the goal of intimating a female archive. The study investigates existing archival discourses while proposing female-inflected alternatives that reconfigure traditional, received forms. Both as physical object and theoretical concept, 'The Archive' as conventionally imagined cannot comfortably hold and embody the complexity that is women's lives. In this dissertation, working uneasily between discussion lead by Deridean theory and experimental feminist revisioning, I investigate notions of the female archive by engaging the lives of three generations of women in my family. I create an interrelated space of oral history, embodied memory, visual record, material artefact, and vestigial traces of lived, everyday practice. In relation to received understandings of 'The Archive', I propose the concepts of the private and the interior archive, examining aspects of archival formation that are rendered unsayable and remain unsaid even as they are (perversely) made obliquely manifest by familial traumas such as alcoholism and domestic abuse. I argue that such reticence in effect facilitates the female family archive, holding ideas, memories and experiences that more formal

institutions of history, culture, class, family and language are unable to articulate. Key to the study is bearing witness to another's life as a proxy for that person's inability to bear witness. I introduce the concept of a closed archive while highlighting, amongst other things, ostracism, abuse and abandonment within, and by, the family. Exploring interactions between body, object and space, the study further proposes the concept of the surrogate as a proxy or substitute, in order to consider how people, objects and places may be envisaged within a female family archive that comes into being through thought and touch, silence and secrecy. Throughout, the study grapples with my convoluted roles in the making of this alternative archival text: researcher, artist, daughter, recorder, translator, granddaughter, and interpreter. I deliberately make use of multiple modes and discourses (among them theory, poetry, photographs, and testimonies), a hybrid approach which enables me to represent my varied roles, and generatively to blur the critical-creative potentials of scholarship and the auto-ethnographic.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie bevat beide 'n praktyk-gedrewe kunstenaarboek, wat op innoverende maniere die konsep van die vroulike familie argief betrek, asook 'n ekstensiewe navorsings komponent wat vrae oor vroulikheid, familie, argief en kreatiewe praktyke teoreties ontleed met die doel om n vroulike argief voor te stel. Die studie ondersoek bestaande argivale diskoerse terwyl dit vroulik-verbuigde alternatiewes, wat tradisionele en ontvanklike vorms her-konstrueer, voorstel. 'Die Argief' soos konventioneel gekarakteriseer, beide as fiesiese objek en teoretiese konsep, kan nie die kompleksitet van vrouens se lewes deeglik omvat en verteenwoordig nie. Terwyl ek versigtig tussen Derridiaans geleide teorïe en eksperimentele vroulike hersienings in die dissertasie werk, ondersoek ek konsepte van die vroulike argief deur drie generasies van vroue in my familie se lewenservaringe te betrek. Ek skep 'n onderling verbinde spasie van mondelinge geskiedenis, vergestalte

herinnering, visuele rekord, materiële artefak, en residuele spore van geleefde, alledaagse praktyk. In verhouding met gegewe begrippe van 'Die Argief' stel ek die konsepte van die private en innerlike argief voor, terwyl ek aspekte van argiefskepping ondersoek wat as onsêbaar geallokeer is en onsê-baar bly selfs al word dit (perverslik) indirek gemanifesteer deur familiêre traumas soos alkolisme en huishoudelike geweld. My argument is dat sulke swygsaamheid in effek die vroulike familie argief fasiliteer, 'n argief wat idees van geheue en belewenis, wat geskiedenis, klas, familie en taal nie in staat is om te artikuleer nie, kan huisves. Die sleutel tot die studie is die dra en lewering van getuienis as proksie vir die lewe van 'n ander persoon en haar/sy onvermoë om self getuines te lewer. Ek stel die konsep van 'n geslote argief voor terwyl ek, onder andere, dinge soos verbanning, misbruik en verwerping binne en deur my familie uitlig. Interaksies tussen liggaam, objek en spasie word verken terwyl die studie die konsep van die surrogaat as proksie en substituut voorstel om sodoende te oorweeg hoe mense, objekte, en plekke binne die familie argief, wat geskep word deur denke, aanraking, stilte en geheimhouding, gebruik en geïmplementeer kan word. Die studie worstel deurlopend met my komplekse rolle van navorser, kunstenaar, dogter, argiefhouer, vertaler, kleindogter en interpreteerder in die maak van die kontra-argivale teks. Ek maak doelbewus gebruik van verskeie metodes van diverse diskoerse (ondermeer teorie, digkuns, fotografie, en getuienis), 'n hibridiese benadering wat my in staat stel om my verskeie rolle voor te stel, en om op 'n generatiewe manier die krities-kreatiewe potensiaal van navorsing en die auto-etnografiese te vervorm.

Acknowledgement

I would like to commence by thanking the National Research Foundation for awarding me the Innovation Scholarship, but also for their continued support and understanding through both the monetary and time extensions they gave me. I told the NRF that the only way I could thank them and be worthy of their belief in me and my abilities was to finish this project – I am beyond thankful that I could keep this promise. Without the support from the NRF this study would never have happened.

To the English Department at Stellenbosch University: Thank you for accepting me to the programme so late in the game. Thank you for your trust in my work and your continued understanding through the various health challenges I had to face during this process. Though I have been somewhat of a ghost in the department in the last years your grace, warmth and beautiful acceptance was not lost on me. The atmosphere you create for your students is, in my opinion, unique, gracious and beyond commendable. The University of Stellenbosch should be immensely proud of, and thankful for, the work this department does.

I owe a colossal debt of gratitude to Prof. Sally-Ann Murray and Dr. Mathilda Slabbert. To call them supervisors would be a massive disservice – they were my mentors; women of words and wisdom, bearers of books, priestesses of poetry and punctuation that gathered my grammar, endured my insanity, shepherded the work of my soul, and whittled me into a writer. Their continued support of and belief in my project is still beyond what I can comprehend. I find beautiful comfort in the fact that these two women have, through their intense involvement, become part of the chain of surrogates in this project.

My love for my family brought me to this work, and the support of my mother and father brought me to its completion. Everything I am is because I am their daughter.

Michiel Goosen you have, in every possible way, kept me alive. You have the unique and beautiful ability to never leave my side yet at the same time let me be and go where I need to. You are the strongest, clearest constant presence in my life, you stand next to me, walk behind me, carry me but you never stifle me. Because you are there I can be and become the woman I want to be. You sit by me while I am on the solo journey of writing and creating. You are the most beautiful being God ever made.

Eternally thankful as I am to all those mentioned I am here, this work has come to fruition only because of the grace of God.

Dedication

For my great grandmother, my grandmothers, my great aunt,

my mother, my aunts and Anne.

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Chapter Four

Introduction

The Profound and Potent Burden

How and *What* we survive

For the past six years I have been engaged in the paradoxical, indeed perhaps impossible, project of investigating my female family archive. I have been intimating my female family archive through a collection of unconventional processes of deep study and entrenched experience in order to make, re-make and make-known a subtle, dispersed body of female stories, experiences, and material objects. Within my work the method I employ in itself becomes a part of the study – my approach does not adhere to coherent or traditional methodology but rather moves across conventional disciplinary lines in order to generate alternative approaches. These unconventional techniques are employed in order to address, and find solutions to, the problematics that inevitably arrive when attempting to engage with and conceptualize a female family archive as it centres around the (mostly silent and absent) wounds rendered by familial trauma as this trauma manifests within quotidian female lives.

I have gathered both conventional documentary data along with more intangible poetic accretions of observed emotion and attributed affect; I have hours of informal conversation with female relatives captured on video, audio and in written media. In the accompanying artist's book I work with the artefacts I have collected, creatively overlaying narrative, word and image with physical nuance and gesture as an attempt to represent a range of psychological moods that hints at the habituated shapes assumed by female lives under particular congruencies of familial, class, cultural, linguistic and social constraints. I view the connective assemblage that has come into creation, a peculiar multimedia portrayal that incorporates family photographs, poetry, oral accounts, and so on, as an example of a female archive, one created by my needful act of research, an archive which in

some oblique, fragmented sense represents the perhaps impossible, certainly elusive, archive of female reticence. This study is the act of intimating the intimate – an attempt to create some means of voicing for the inarticulate and unarticulated female archive. I aim to bring the spectral being of this archive to various forms of expressive life, using theories and practices associated with femaleness to create an alternative discourse to the more conventional Archive. The artistic-conceptual methods of my research focus on languages of silence, investigating in both verbal and visual media how these silences dis/appear and if and how they might find expression.

As effect, this 'text' includes theoretical discussions and arguments on family, trauma and the literary, with poetic and visual re-formatting of found family materials. Language becomes part of these 'found family materials' seeing that there are linguistic aspects of power within the family that manifest through the use of Afrikaans and English. I am writer, researcher, artist and archivist but I have also had to become translator and interpreter….As a woman in this family my roles in the making and writing of this counter-archival text are dispersed and convoluted. I find my multidisciplinary style the best approach through which to accommodate and give expression to all these roles, supporting the complexity and innovation of my study.

In choosing this complex and challenging approach, I wish to create an innovative constellation of idea, image, text; a theoretically-inflected work of literature/art of diverse concepts contributing to an area of critical-creative research that blurs scholarship and the auto-ethnographic. This errant[1] method of making is currently unusual, even disconcerting, in a South African academic context which continues to be structured along coherent disciplinary lines, but female scholars, in particular, have found the methods and practices which I propose to use important to female artists' and writers' making of their imaginative-intellectual projects and to the formation of philosophies of female expression which subtly reconfigure

[1] 'Errant', here, meaning wandering, recalcitrant *and* open to mis/take.

received norms, whether those of patriarchal master narratives or of an authoritarian Feminism (see for example Moure [2009] and Blau-DuPlessis [1990]). My research moves between a series of overlapping primary and secondary fields. Using the related arenas of Critical Theory, Gender and Women's Studies as well as Life Writing and Cultural Studies as guiding theoretical perspectives I investigate existing archival discourses while proposing 'alternative', more creative ways of working with established archival conventions. Within the process of the investigation, I essay erratic movements into pertinent sub-fields, such as trauma theory, psychoanalysis and phenomenology, feminist writing methodology, and thing theory, as well as into studies of grief and loss.

'The archive' - both physical object and theoretical concept - struggles against failure in seeking to 'hold' and embody the complexity that is women's lives. I investigate these aspects as they materialise within female testimonies of familial trauma. I approach my work with the understanding that under and around the utterance that is assumed to comprise a female family narrative there simultaneously occurs a reticence, an elusive collection of things unsaid and unsayable. In effect such taciturnity, I propose, becomes the female family archive.

This study is a re-turn to the interlaced family archive of oral history, unsteadily embodied memory, identity's portrayal and everyday practice. In terms of South African contexts, I focus attention on a relatively neglected demographic, namely, white housewives and mothers from a lower-cum-middle class stratum, within the social and physical setting of a small Karoo town between the 1920s to the present.

Through the interior and exterior trudge my work has mandated I have come to know that my family narrative and its acquired and inherited archive redeems and devastates in equal measure; the archive becomes as much what women in my family survive as how we survive. The female archive I have inherited consists of a body of traces that, once entered, fugitively reveals an intricate web of complex relations between narrative,

body and the physical environment. Through layered processes of intimation I locate and investigate notions of the female archive as private and interior, and examine the aspects that are rendered unsayable and remain unsaid even as they are made manifest by familial trauma. Via my investigation I have created both a text that is made public as well as an 'associated archive' within the artist's book – my work thus becomes the exterior and public to the interior and private of the female archive it investigates. Here, I ask a reader to understand that to intimate is to make known, sometimes; though in many cases intimation just hints at the unknowability of the intimate, much as close, intimate connection might be desired. Even the familiar denotative meanings of the transitive verb 'to intimate' are relevant, since the term can designate communicative processes that hint at, or convey delicately and indirectly, *but* may also sometimes constitute announcing, making something known formally and publicly. The private and interior archive I have inherited as well as the public and exterior archive I have created leave their own traumatic trace – I am left honoured and obligated by this profound and potent burden, and it is the awareness and weight of this ambivalent, intimate inheritance that brought me to this study.

Jacques Derrida's work, and others' strategic reworking of his ideas, offers a productive, even provocative, theoretical prompt for my study.[2] My dissertation demands that I explore a relatively uncharted relationship between feminism and the Derridean that is at once necessary and uneasy. I will address the archive as described here, appropriate it and reconfigure it to form a private archive that manifests in erratic form a collection of interrupted female histories that exist discreetly in things less substantive, even, than notable trace. Toward the end of his life Lacan speaks of the "non-phallic, or the private, archive of women as a discourse on non-

[2] Derrida's work is one of the primary influences on my research, especially his theories on the archive in *Archive Fever* (1995) as well as the two papers written on the lectures he delivered at the University of the Witwatersrand in the '*Refiguring the Archive'* series. These texts are seminal, forming a basis for many of my arguments though I often critically re-configure his ideas in order to locate a private, female archive in an o/pen oppositional relation to Derrida's thinking about a public and exterior archive. Even here, however, I am nevertheless drawing on the intellectual richness of Derrida's approach.

discourse" – this is the very archive I am investigating and creating (Holly, 2008: 37). Beyond narrative, per se, in more theoretical terms, Paul Ricoeur speaks of the secret places that narrative possesses which do not allow interpretation, and in supplementing such lack he discusses the fragile liberation enabled by poetry's fragmentation, the power of a more poetic means of recounting than prosaic narrative convention permits (1984: 75-76). I make a conscious and deliberate relocation from a male, even patriarchal, approach to the archive towards a female archival poetics that speaks to the embodied act of writing about the archive. The change in my theoretical approach corresponds with realignment in the area of focus from an oral archive to a physical archive. Scholars like Cixous suggest that because the female archive is a sensory and tactile archive of experience it disrupts language and the borders of academic disciplines, which coincides with the nature of my own artistic-conceptual project for the dissertation. A move towards the poetic, in my dissertation text, includes using and concentrating on aspects of meaning-making by paying attention to rhythm, textual space, intonation, and the transcription of spoken language into stanzaic and image forms that attempt to embody meaning figuratively, thereby giving shape to a possible female archive.

The institutions of history, culture and family fail to express the trauma they hold and so often inflict; in the wounds concealed within these institutions the languages of the unsayable and unsaid are generated. These ephemeral yet haptic sites speak tenuously, wordlessly, about the content of the female archive, implying that within its complex discourse it utters aberrant, occluded narrative lines around death, alcoholism, and forms of violent abuse and molestation that exist within the family space. The focus is the female family archive, concentrating on trauma and the 'non-language' of the unsayable and unsaid within my own family by looking at generations of female lives. In my study, attention is deliberately paid to the intimate, small, silent, almost invisible sites that serve as the entrance/lips of a wound, a paradoxically evident and yet clandestine opening to that elusive place where the archive exists.

My research spans four generations, focused on a selection of women and their everyday lives in their individual domestic spheres, from a (my) family and the broader society of a small Karoo town in South Africa. This chosen, personal area of focus might seem insignificant, unnecessary even, possibly frustrating for a reader. However, I concur with J. Gary Knowles who argues that

> [c]lusters of individual lives make up communities, societies, and cultures. To understand some of the complexities, complications and confusions within the life of just one member of a community is to gain insight to the collective. In saying this we are not invoking an essentialist claim to understand (however partially) *one* is to understand *all*. Rather we are suggesting that every in-depth exploration of an individual life-in-context brings us that much closer to understanding the complexities of lives in communities.
>
> (2001:11)

I am not arguing that "to understand one is to understand all" but in this project I agree that to look at one person is also to look at a collection of people, be it a family, society or culture. The study grapples with a series of interrelated questions that arise from the key provocation: *'How to write the/my female/family a/Archive?'* I address this by creating a multidisciplinary, multi-media dissertation text that intimates, simultaneously depicting *and* expanding the archive by drawing on a performative repertoire of narrative, critical theory, photographic image, affective graphs and poetry. As writer and researcher I aim to create a research text which in its very form generates an alternative, disruptive discourse on trauma within the family, as an attempt to approach trauma's inaccessible wound and to render the conflicted, discreet shapes of a female family archive. As artist I endeavour to represent and to speculate upon relations amongst body, psyche, and house. Both through my collective methodologies as well as the work rendered in their application, I seek to

contribute to the field of women's life-writing whilst adding to archival studies. My research suggests valuable approaches which explore trauma theory in engagement with embodied subjectivity, situated knowledge and the relationship of affect to family history.

The research component of the thesis text carries my belief that in order to intimate a female family archive one has to read outside of conventionally descriptive, referential, denotative language. To this end, I employ methods[3] such as double listening (listening to what is said and unsaid) writing back, un-writing, re-reading and un-reading, as theoretical and 'practical' strategies. All such methods entail finding places where the text irritates or does not fit. Here, I give discomforting attention to contradictions, ambiguity, non-coherence, smoothed coherence, selection, designation, multiplicity, revision, self-correction, hesitation, vagueness, withdrawal, silence, retraction, avoidance and the like. In addition, attention is paid to physical reactions such as blushing, and to gestures and postures).[4] Also, I acknowledge the importance of the personal experiences and impressions of the researcher, a meta-awareness even more acute and necessary for me as I am part of the family being investigated and also its partial archivist, a relation neither complete, nor impartial. Clearly, as the archive investigated consists of very subtle nuances the research and creative texts will aim to do the same, by concentrating on particular embodied details, even performing these at strategic points. I explore the relationship between language/text and/as image as a way to locate and express elements that are beyond discursive description. The study engages the paradoxical notion of a 'discourse on non-discourse'; hence the formats of both the dissertation research text and the accompanying artist's book are shaped by processual modes of enquiry that give rise to hybrid forms. The texts aim to write the past not by erecting a monolithic, assertive counter-archive that rights the errors of some Archive handed down by History, but by "deferring closure

[3] The most primary source of reference for these methods is "An Interpretive Poetics of Languages of the Unsayable" by Rogers et al. (1999: 77-106).
[4] Rogers et al., 1999: 77-106.

and complacency in favour of process and creative reworking" (Samuelson 2011: 63).

The process of intimating the intimate female archive is multifaceted in its qualifications, interpretations, and applications because this archive consists of complex qualities, traits and behaviours that, at times, seem to overwhelm the single concept of 'the female archive'. This being said there is, in my opinion, no impartial way in which to approach this intricate archive. This study has a paradoxical nature at its core; the female family archive I investigate is deliberate in its own entangled creation, existence and repercussions, and yet at the same time curiously unaware of, or perhaps only obliquely alert to, these parameters. It is both private and interior in nature, conscious and unconscious. My investigation, which entails the interviews, this text and the poetic and artistic modes of expression within the study, materialise an aspect or extension of my female family archive that also becomes a transference to the exterior and public through these modes of expression.

A complex and incongruous element is at work where the interior female archive is concerned seeing that its transmission relies on external actions and sensory experiences. Within the interior archive the concepts of inside and outside are distorted, or rather employed and applied in ways other than in traditional archival processes. In his lectures at the University of the Witwatersrand Derrida argues that,

> An *archive has to be public*, even if it is hidden provisionally or appropriated by someone. It belongs to the concept of the archive that it be public, precisely because it is located. You cannot keep an archive inside yourself – this is not archive. Because of the exteriority that I mentioned at the beginning, an archive has to be public.
>
> (Van Zyl, 2002: 48)

Yet in *Archive Fever* he nevertheless alludes to the necessity of taking into account the significance of the psychic apparatus which blurs "certain borders between insides and outsides" (1995:18). If this apparatus blurs the borders between inside and outside would it be possible to locate the interior archive within the 'psychic apparatus'? One needs more knowledge of this apparatus, and Sigmund Freud provides us with more insight for he describes the psychic apparatus as an indeterminate, immaterial configuration of the mind and suggests that we think of it as the photographic camera that consists of "ideal localities or planes in which no tangible portion of the apparatus is located"[5] (1932: 494). I agree with Freud's and Derrida's suggestions that there is a necessity to take into account this interior where borders are blurred, and as a way of thinking forward, I extrapolate from these understandings of the psychic apparatus to establish the intangible place of the psychic interior that is – that *becomes* - the interior and intimate archive. There is feminist precedent for such ideas in the work of Trinh T. Minh-Ha, for example. In "Grandma's Story" she writes about a female archive, arguing that,

> The world's earlier archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand [...] the speech is seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched. It destroys, brings into life, nurtures. Every woman partakes in the chain of guardianship and transmission.
>
> (1993: 5)

This archive engages with the articulated to connect with the inarticulate; it collects and connects with physical objects and spaces in order to reach the ephemeral; it facilitates physical touch in order to beget the ephemeral beyond touch. It is from this perspective that I explore palimpsest family story and memory as sites of harbouring, concealing and facilitating familial violence and trauma, showing that in different instances the family narrative is 'preferred' by both perpetrator and victim, by the family and society. In

[5] Freud's use of the metaphor of the camera will feature again in my discussions of photography and the interior archive.

this way, family narrative simultaneously creates the interior female archive whose convolutions, silences and lacunae paradoxically prompt me, as a part of this female archive as well as researcher and artist, to make known and find expression for this archive. In other words, I am prompted , thus to make public, to a certain degree, this alternative interior and private archive that exists at an oblique relation to received family history.

My work moves beyond theory toward more artistic and poetic modes of expression. Yet it also moves beyond theory in the sense that it moves beyond the boundaries of fields of theory onto, at and inside the thresholds between different disciplines of academic scholarship. However, I must also emphasise that in order to reach these areas of the in-between I have had to move through the density of theory itself. The women in this study in their miscellany of interlaced social, familial, and in my case scholarly, positioning, have had to create formations that can facilitate movement away from the male discourse in which they (*we*) were obliged to function for so long. We have had to commence by working from within the male discourses yet at the same time aiming not to reside in them longer than needed. This being said, it is however never possible completely to remove oneself from the realm of theory, thus I argue that working from a multidisciplinary theoretical perspective *towards* a dynamic interwoven 'alternative' approach is both more prudent, and more generative, than dutifully remaining within one defined field or another. To accommodate this peculiar movement in and through theory, my relationship with theory and my use of theoretical ideas in this study is unconventional, transgressing the framework of traditional dissertation formats and methods. It might at times even seem that I use quotations out of context to a certain degree, a method which is usually not acceptable in works of scholarship. I opt for this somewhat risky process because I find that it functions well within a dissertatation text that relies heavily on juxtapositioning and even happenstance; the method also has the advantage of allowing both me as writer and you as reader to make various interconnected, complex and often contradictory connections within the process of, respectively, creating and

reading this work. Thus by my employing this unusual method, the text is deeply inclusive to the reader, extending constant invitations, as it frequently requires, and presupposes, the reader's participation. A reader is asked to see that the shifts between the loose relationship with theory, recollection and reflection leads too forms of thinking that are often associative, rather than purely (or instrumentally) argumentative. Such an approach prioritises the creation of both effective and affective relations, above a strict claim to the coherence of a scholarly methodology.

My methodology pivots around the argument that some alternative is needed to enter the female family archive, and I assert that it is within the realm of the connections between person, object and space that this alternative can be located. In more plain-speaking terms, this realm can be described as lived experience – this is the space where physicality and interiority, touch and thought, meet within the processes of experiencing. The processes include acts of registering, resonating, confirming, capturing and creating. This relocation from the narrative archive to a physical archive is undeniably a paradoxical shift, in that the physical archive focusses on an array of *intangible* connections between a person and the objects and places within and against which this person's existence develops. However intangible, though, I reason that these relationships are in some sense durable; while they are elusive they are nevertheless able to endure, and in so doing to suggestively depict and trace attributes of the unsayable and unsaid.

This still relatively other, under-explored realm of experience becomes the subject and method of my female family archive. In intimating this female family archive I employ recurring sub-themes and metaphors to facilitate synesthetic movement among the analytical discussion of the research text itself and the various modes of expression and archival practice within my female family archive while also adapting this archi in alternative forms of expression through the visual and poetic work I create. It is with the poetry and the artist's book that I most intensely give an alternative expression to the archive I have inherited. This is an archive I pursue to reconceive with

both the propinquity and the distance that the combinations of creative and intellectual approaches enable in order to reach a place of alternative expression where dispersion can be welcomed as an unusual, fluid element of archival practice.

Chapter One

Testimonies

Three Generations

To begin to locate, investigate, and bring my female family archive to some form of expression, I start by entering into an archive that is slowly and carefully conveyed and shared through complex relations between narrative and body. Also though: this entails engaging in erratic, oblique ways, marked by slippages and indirection. The women in my family speak with and through our bodies, sharing sensory narratives that, through the mediation of the researcher figure, we create in synesthetic methods that both uses language and alters the linguistic beyond discourse.

The following three testimonies trace and sometimes reveal aspects of familial trauma, but it is necessary to listen to the absent and give breath to the silence.

V

Grand/mother

Return to the root from which they grew.

This return to the root is called Quietness.

(Tao-te-ching as cited in Minh-Ha. 1993: 2)

I begin with my grandmother's testimony; a collection of audio and video interviews I conducted with her. I re/turn to these testimonies in order to sense beyond the speech as it exists within these archives that both wreck and rear. I come back to the interview...she is sitting in her window seat and I am sitting across from her in her small living room.[6] Her legs dangle like a child's; bare feet. She is dressed in the same dress I will wear, five years later, to her funeral. [7]

I am now returning to this interview after her passing. My viewing, my listening, is multiple and intensely layered. Yet each time I go back she is still in her window seat and my voice still blindly comes from the same direction. We will always be sitting there. But this event of speech, of memory, of forgetting, this interaction that we will learn to know as becoming inside the female archive will never stay still. Her passing speech, her pointed testimony, her silence: this *is* the archive. In

[6] I use italics and different font types to coax a reader's eyes visually to differentiate between the I of the writer as she is writing and the I's of her past.

[7] This dress, and the occasion of me wearing, it is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

addition, it is always also *within* the archive. The dark attic/cellar/room/womb with sparse light that warms the tones of darkness, keeping cool from the baking sun, thin films of floating dust and skin, smelling the deep origins of wetness too old to know. In the section 'a, b, d, v' in the accompanying book I use a collection of images - re-photographed stills from my video interview with my grandmother (pp. 6-53). She appears in a dark silhouette, suggesting the warm darkness of the archive, the warm flesh-like hues next to the darker blues, greys and purples can also be seen in the sections 'l, s, w' (pp. 54-61), and 'd, g, I, r, s, t' (pp. 62-71), continuing to suggest a simultaneous relationship between warmth and darkness. At the suggestion of the definition of the word flip (p. 7) the reader should treat this particular section as a 'flip-book' – using, as suggested, the right hand to pinch the pages between the thumb and forefinger to create a fast paced movement through the pages.[8] Because the images of my grandmother are small in format and placed on the edge of the page this rapid movement will create a sense of animation in the images. This sense of animation is enhanced by the fact that the images depict my grandmother in the same seated position making various gestures as she talks. Even though the images create a jerking sense of movement the motion remains stunted in its inability to manage more than a mere suggestion of her giving her testimony. Yet the gestures do at least suggest a view of my grandmother's performative act of testimony - these moments of movement are moments of her own expression. The repetition also reflects the various layers of the process of both giving testimony and listening to it, and this is enhanced by my choice to repeat the same image on both (on both) the page on the left and the right - thus the flipbook can be used in a forward and a backward motion. With this I indicate that time is not just linear and that there is more than one trajectory in the process of giving testimony. The images aim at revealing yet never truly allowing clear access - merely

[8] This tactile interaction will not be possible with the electronic book yet one is still able to flip the pages as well as use your mouse to turn the page.

creating a small knowing of the unknown and unknowable. Minh-Ha refers to Gayl Jones' novel *Corregidora*:

> My great-grandmama told my grandmama the past she lived through that my grandmama didn't live through and my grandmama told my mama what they both lived through and my mama told me what they all lived through and we were supposed to pass it down like that from generation to generation so we'd never forget. Even though they'd burned everything to play like it didn't never happen.
>
> (1993: 5)

Soliede eentonige windklank wat ons aanmekaar hou soos lap

sag soos fluister stem langs oor – vwhrrrrr hvvvvv vwhrrrr

w aai er r r[9]

In the interview I ask my grandmother what she, as a child, was not allowed to ask or talk about. In the very act of asking this question I am committing to making present an absence asked to enquire about its own absence. One might wonder if asking what was not asked is not in a sense pointless or impossible - either that which was not asked remains unknown or it is somehow revealed without asking and therefore does not exist in the same way as it did before. But understand: I do not ask to find answers and words; I am asking about not asking. I am talking about not talking, about speech about non-speech, and I do this because I adhere to Giorgio Agamben's concept that William Robert invokes in his article "Witnessing the Archive: In Mourning" when he asserts that "[t]estimony takes place 'where the speechless one makes the speaking one speak and where the one

[9] Translation: Solid, monotonous wind-sound that keeps us together like cloth, soft like a whisper next to the ear – fwhrrrrr hffffff fwhrrrr, f aaa n n n.

who speaks bears the impossibility of speaking in his [her] own speech'" (2006: 42).

teekoppie en lepel,

waaier

Hoe sê jy?

sagte vêr stem,

asof dit die eerste vraag is wat ek vra

asof ons nie in die midddel van 'n gesprek is nie

asof dit donker is waar sy is

of sy's in 'n ander vertrek... en kan my nie mooi hoor nie

haar stem klink soos haar kamer somersaande sou lyk;

aan die einde van die gang waar die lig brand...

haar kamer,

wat oopdeur staan - is altyd donker,

tog , van heel agter

kom daar 'n ou en baie dowwe lig in

die straatlig op die hoek

val skuins deur die gaas van die oop kamervenster[10]

[10] Translation: tea cup and spoon, fan. What are you saying? Soft far away voice, as if it is the first question I am asking, as if we are not in the middle of a conversation, as if it is dark where she is, or she is in a different room… and cannot hear well. her voice sounds like her bedroom looked on summer evenings; at the end of the hall, where the light was shining… her bedroom, where the door stood open – is always

She evades me and my question, with soft lowered voice and slight tilt of head. Her round eyes are simultaneously deep-set and protruding. Behind the milky vagueness on the opal surface there still rests something of the deep round black-brown eyes she and her sisters were known for. In her grandchild's eyes, the same black-brown stares back at her, waiting for her to speak. Again I ask, "When Grandma was a child, what were you not allowed to talk about"? Repetition. This gives her time – to digest… invent… elude… forget? With a soft, light voice, coming wet and round from the hollow at the back of her throat: "No, that I cannot remember".

The writers of "An Interpretive Poetics of Languages of the Unsayable" discuss the various ways of identifying and interpreting these languages focussing specifically on the participants responses "in the context of the dramatic interplay of question and response in the presence of an interviewer" (Rogers et al., 1999: 87-89). I would like to apply these methods to this interview, where I argue that the "dramatic interplay" is heightened and more complex because I am not just 'an interviewer' but also the respondent's grandchild. Yet I find it important to note that this 'application' is probably better described as a looser adaptation of the methods, seeing as I have chosen to render, and interpret, these interviews in a poetic manner rather than as social science data. My method deploys the language of affect and effect rather than producing clear critical categories that might seem to diagnose and classify.

Keeping this distinction in mind I find that my grandmother's reaction can be viewed as an example of the "language of evasion" (Rogers et al., 1999: 88). My grandmother asks me to repeat the question, after which she changes her tone of voice and demeanour and then goes on to say that she 'can't remember' that; she does not say she has forgotten it, but that she cannot remember. This choice of words, this reaction, hints at the idea that the information is not actually forgotten; not lost or irretrievable: it is still

dark, still, from far at the back there comes an old and dim light in, the streetlight from the corner falls in a slant through the gauze of the open bedroom window.

'there', within the psychic apparatus which holds her archive but she either cannot reach it or does not want to. explain, the language of evasion is complex, a complex of hesitation, vagueness, brevity, discomfort and withdrawal (Rogers et al., 1999: 88). These elements mark my grandmother's response as we continue with the interview:

Ek: En waarvoor was Ouma bang, as kind en later as jong mens, watse vrese het Ouma gehad?

(kort stilte, dan dadelik)

Ouma: As my pa te veel gedrink het en hy is beduiweld

(stem, eentonig, reguit - maar laag)

Ek: Was Ouma dan bang?

Ouma: Dit was disgusting...

(die woord is vuil, dikwarmtaai - kom uit soos spoeg).[11]

(Personal interview. March, 2009)[12]

In the first question she is elusive, shifting into a space of the 'unremembered' rather than the forgotten. She was already dwelling there, taken there. With the following question, though, her answer is very quick, instinctive, it seems to be less repressed by the preferred rationales and known methods - or maybe it just escaped. I found that the words 'scared' and specifically 'fear' coupled with the word 'childhood' pulled from her an instinctive answer that came from the recesses of the body, the very alcoves of her archive. Squirm, wince, recoil... withdraw. She continued: "Ek, ek, ek"

[11] Translation: Me: And what was Grandma afraid of, as child and later as a young person, what fears did Grandma have? (short silence, then immediately) Grandma: When my father drank too much and he was crazed. (voice monotone, direct – but low) M: Was Grandma scared then? G: It was disgusting. (the word is dirty, thickwarmsticky – comes out like spit).

[12] All the interviews are translated verbatim as I find it imperative to retain and convey the immediate and conversational element of these interviews. My goal was not *accurate* linguistic translation, but rather the powerful sense impression of a person's voice and being and her lived experience.

(quickly here, as if she had to say it quickly, as if she did not have the will to remember it any longer than a moment, as if she could not stay in the archive any longer), "haal dit uit uit my geheue... ek wil dit nie onthou nie" (Personal interview. March, 2009).[13]

Derrida's point is valid here, his reminder that the archive "shelters itself from this memory which it shelters [...] the memory thus becoming that which it forgets" (1995: 9). In the interview, even as my grandmother carries the archive within her she shelters herself from this memory and/or she purposefully forgets it. Yet to say one forgets something is also to say that one remembers it. Here, my grandmother literally describes her conscious process of forgetting; my grandmother burns everything "to play like it didn't never happen" (Jones as cited in Minh-Ha, 1993: 5). Freud writes about the 'death drive': "that is a drive to, precisely, destroy the trace without any reminder, without any trace, without any ashes. So on the one hand you have a device, a structure, in which what is repressed – that is forgotten... is kept safe in another location of the psychic apparatus". Yet he continues to argue that the death drive motivates the "radical destruction of the archive... burning into ashes the very trace of the past" (as cited in Van Zyl, 2002: 42). I argue that the psychic apparatus is an interior archive; the place where the forgotten is 'kept safe', where it finds shelter. Yet this archive is inevitably conflicted, for it is at times aglow with the light of fire and at other times pale with ash.

Derrida writes that "there is a perverse, a perverse, desire for forgetting in the archive itself... there is more than repression, there is an erasure that doesn't keep the repressed thing in some other place, but which produces forgetting by remembering" (as cited in Harris, 2002: 68). Derrida refers to "some other place" where repressed things are not kept, but I do not agree. Instead, I argue that there is such a place and that this is the psychic interior – the elusive and layered interior archive. I do, however, agree with Derrida that there is a peculiar need to forget, but I suggest that this need is not merely disobedient, however much it is that too. It is also quite

[13] Translation: I, I, I take it out of my memory…I don't want to remember it.

contrary in being obliging and uneasily accommodating. The perversity of my grandmother's will to forget is complex, since there is a need to forget in order to survive, to cope, but there is also an obligation to forget. In order to understand the reasons and the needs for forgetting one has to become more acquainted with the interior archive.

In *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* Michel Foucault maintains that while "[s]peech about speech leads us [...] to the outside" it is "[t]hought about thought, an entire tradition wider than philosophy, has taught us that thought leads us to the deepest interiority" (1998: 149). I contend that the psychic interior is this interior space of "thought about thought" and that it is within this inner locality that the concepts of the unsayable and unsaid, as these exist within the family, are located within a secretive and hidden dialogue. This dialogue exists beyond what is admitted and it is most often unspoken, a conversation had with the self or an other in the form of an interiorised exchange that is more of flesh than of language. Here, it is important to differentiate that which is merely unsaid and what may in some fundamental ways be unsayable:

> From a psychological point of view, we distinguish a range of significance in various constructions of the unsaid... from something merely omitted, to something that cannot be expressed in the context of a particular interview, to something difficult to say in any context, and finally, to something too dangerous to speak or even to know.
>
> (Rogers et al., 1999: 80)

My grandmother's testimony implies what is unsaid, in the sense that it has been omitted; it has been consciously excluded (for a welter of conscious reasons and unconscious impulses), creating a gap that draws attention to what she would not or could not articulate. This is a lacuna of language, yes, but also of overwhelming affect. Within a family, one is expected to comply with preferred family narratives and one learns to forget out of pressure from family (and society) but also out of the less overt constraints

of love and respect. As Mark Freeman notes: “From the sensuous immediacy of childhood[…] we are steadily made to forget, to erase that endless well of emotions, in order that we can successfully carry on with the various tasks upon which the social order depends” (1993: 51). A status quo is needed in order for the family to function, and in my grandmother’s case the social order, and the order in the home, demands respect for the father’s role in the house as well as his reputation (Holway, 1999: 123). What is most important, what lies at the core of this perverse and obligatory forgetting-cum-omission in respect of her father’s behaviour, is the immensely complex knot that binds familial love with familial trauma. This is an entanglement that my research project puzzles over, although it can never completely unpick the snarled strands.

In *Giving an Account of Oneself* Judith Butler observes that “Someone who has been offended, slighted, has an illumination as vivid as when agonizing pain lights up one’s own body”. When one is wounded in this manner within a family, by a family member, one “becomes aware that in the innermost blindness of love” we as victims of such familial trauma must remain oblivious and thus we must “accept the inevitability of injury” (2005: 101-102). This blindness is desired for our own sake, in my grandmother’s case, she requires a figurative blindness for herself in relation to her father in order to quell her own pain, but also for the perpetrator’s sake. The perpetrator, in this case my grandmother’s father, is thus protected through her blindness because in this family love abides, and the guise of not seeing enables the perpetrator once again to become as s/he was before: our father or uncle; our mother or sister. In my opinion, my grandmother also needs this for her father, perversely hoping – almost through magical thinking - to remove the pain that drives him to drink as well as the pain he causes when he is drunk.

After admitting that her father’s behaviour was repulsive and that she therefore excises it from memory, my grandmother after a short pause and

in a completely different tone says: “Ek sal my kinder (sluk) dae nie vir die queen vergeet nie, dit was te lekker”[14] (Personal interview, March, 2009).

Dry voice, removed, lost-in-thought, no eye contact,

head

down

feet dang - ling

then her tone completely changes,

warm, wet, light - from a deeper hollow… talking about trivial things.

Under my prompting, my grandmother retreats into the “language of revision, or undoing knowledge”; she represses her father’s unsettling behaviour further, and instead foregrounds the fonder memories of childhood. This process of revisioning, as Rogers et al. remark, “encompasses a range of instances” (1998: 88). There is “explicit contradiction or denial” and “explicit negation” and “these expressions create multiplicity [...] provid[ing] evidence” not of actually *forgetting* but of a convoluted remembering that entails “constructing [...] reconstructing [...] imagining [...] selecting,” a complex process of “revising details and impressions” (1999: 88).

In effect, while sometimes we are made to forget, we may also choose to forget. This is a willed blindness that exacts its silence and becomes the complex foundation of the female archive. We, the women in my family, are all tainted by our acts of archiving, and what is perverse about our forgetting (which as Derrida argues is also the unavoidable act of archiving), is the fact that through the sheltering of the blindness and the silence in our interior archive we become ‘accomplices’; the archive becomes as much what

[14] Translation: I won’t forget my childhood [swallows] days for the queen, it was too lovely.

the women in my family survive as how/why we survive. Under and around the utterance there simultaneously occurs a reticence, for as we speak we unspeak; as we forget we remember; as we keep we loosen and aim to lose. My female family archive is an elusive, ambiguous, infinite multiplicity that the women collect and also scatter.

In "Witnessing the Archive: In Mourning," William Robert argues that, "[t]o bear witness is also an archival technology [...] it is the fragment of memory that is always forgotten in the act of saying 'I'" (2006: 44). As my Grandmother states; "Ek, ek, ek... haal dit uit my geheue... ek wil dit nie onthou nie" ("I, I, I... take it out of my memory... I don't want to remember it"). Robert's ideas are helpful here, for he writes about the 'I' within the act of testimony, citing Derrida's *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*:

> The 'I' may shift for the same witness across time, since the date marks a difference "between the one who says 'I' and the 'I' of the young man of whom he speaks and who is himself." In other words, the subject in the present who says 'I' today cannot replace even her own 'I' from her original dated testimony (an 'I' that has become other), since she is no longer in the instant.
>
> (2006: 43)

I look at this, my grandmother's testimony, from a poetic perspective, aiming to read it replete with repetitions, cadences, and reverberations, all of which comprise a subtle performance of memory and dis/remembering: the phrasing 'I, I, I...I' while uttered in the moment of interview, could also be said to illustrate the witness' inability simply to express herself in the moment, as the utterance is marked by multiple returns to the testimony from different times, places and perspectives in her life. It is the 'I' of the subject that moves across time, or rather in and out of time, via memories. In Afrikaans the word for I is 'ek', and 'ek' is only written with a capital 'e' when it is at the start of a sentence. Hence to translate the statement more accurately one *(I)* would have to write 'I, i, i...'. Visually this helps to

introduce the notion of different 'I's' – there is more than one I, many times in her life, that wants to rip (and has wanted to rip) the disgusting recollection out of her memory. More than one occasion; more than one 'I'. The 'i' that returns to the I that lived the experience is now always removed, always less, always diminished. The 'i' that comes back to cite the self will never again be the initial, experiencing I, it will always be spec/tral/tator consciously witnessing and struggling to narrate. The repetition 'Ek, ek, ek' reveals that even in this one instance of testimony the 'returning' is multiple – in three short, rapid articulations, all apparently repeated, yet also distinctly fragmented, she becomes thrice other to herself, unable simply to reprise a coherent expression of identity and say 'I', once and for all. This corroborates Robert's claim that "[l]anguage, in order to bear witness, must give way to a non-language in order to show the impossibility of bearing witness" (2006: 42). This assertion clears the way in this dissertation for me to move toward the suspension of functional language in favour of a more poetic and expressive discourse which brings to language "aspects, qualities and values of reality that lack access to language that is directly descriptive and that can be spoken only by means of the complex interplay between the metaphorical utterance and the rule-governed transgression of the usual meanings of our words" (Ricoeur, 1984: x-xi).

Referring to her father's drunken nights my grandmother says: "Dan…" (words and expression struggle, shake…forming only with difficulty a sentence), "het hy nou in 'n ander kamer gaan slaap" (her old woman's voice is a child's voice, soft but serious), "en dan het ons, die hele spul, by Mammie in die kamer [gaan slaap], nou nie ligte nie…die lamp brand nog, almal om haar" (Personal interview, Jan, 2009).[15]

Soft voice, something holy -

the sweet breath of bosom.

[15] Translation: Then…he would go sleep in another room…and then we would, the whole bunch, go sleep in Mommy's bedroom, now no lights…the lamp still burning, everyone around her.

Ten seconds silence my own heart strikes.

Cup to lips…swallow…cup to saucer.

Three seconds,

chest in – chest out.

Her voice, now full, but false,

story suddenly skipped… to where it is pretty -

only a few, told over and over again.

, " " " " "

, " " " " "

Nine notes nothing then

her silence singing.

When I ask my grandmother what she would do, as a child, when she was unhappy, she responds:

> Dan gan ek na hulle twee toe, die twee vriendinne. Dan het ek na hulle toe gegaan, dan het hulle altyd met my gesels en so - en dan is dit daar wat ons so gelag het dat die trane loop want die bietjie jonger suster, wat nou my ouderdom was, as sy nou sien die despondency het ingetree dan moet sy nou iets uitdink…Wat kan sy nou doen? 'Oee', sy sal vir ons dans, dan dans sy, in die sand, dat die stof so staan, met twee skoon skoene. Dit was ook al, ek het nooit ander vriende gehad nie. En ek kon altyd, Daddy het nou 'n probleem gehad – en wanneer hy oorgegaan het om te drink - en hy kom nou in die middag by die huis…het ek altyd na hulle toe gehardloop, na die twee toe jy weet, om die tyd bietjie optemaak. En om vir my te entertain het B** altyd

> gedans - om die huis dat die stof so staan, want hulle kon ook niks anders sê of doen nie.[16]
>
> (Personal interview, Jan, 2009)

The story about the two friends she retells so many times but she never speaks about the particular situation from which she ran. She never discloses what it entailed. This reminds me that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Freud as cited in Bennett, 2003: 35). Within testimony, to 'not know' or not remember is also always to say that something *is* known, something *is* remembered. As T. H Pear writes in *Remembering and Forgetting*, "[t]he distant lighthouse-flash stabbing the pitch darkness; the squeak of a mouse breaking the stillness of an empty room; neither of these come where nothing was before" (1922: 30). Though my grandmother gives testimony, daring to speak of her father's alcoholism, she does not elaborate. She does not speak of the trauma, and what she saw and felt. She does not speak about him and what he did. Instead, she tells me of where she went to hide, where she went to 'not know', to not see and not feel, to not live in consciousness of acknowledging what was presenting itself to be processed as family knowledge.

A person usually hides in order to elude being found, but through her testimony my grandmother goes back and finds herself, reveals her hiding places to me: "by Mammie in die kamer", "na hulle twee toe, die twee vriendinne". But still she does not reveal or name the trauma. That remains

[16]Translation: Then I go to them, the two friends. Then I would go to them, and they would always talk to me – and it was then that we would laugh till the tears were rolling because the sister that was a little younger, the one that was my age, when she saw that the despondency stepped in, then she must think of something… What can she do? 'Ooh' she will dance for us, and then she danced, in the sand, with her clean shoes, till the dust rose up around us. And I could always, Daddy had a problem – and when he went over to start drinking again – and he came home in the afternoon… I always ran to them, the two [friends], to make up the time a little bit. And to entertain me B** would always dance – all around the house till the dust rose up, because there was nothing else they could do or say.

'not known'. It is shame, perhaps. It is fear. Beyond that, I can only speculate....And yet I agree with Pear that just because there is a gaping absence in her testimony this silence does not negate the presence of trauma. Indeed it is the darkness and the absence itself, instead of her verbal narrative, which testifies to the trauma.

When I asked my grandmother what she feared as a child she used the word 'disgusting' to describe her drunk father. The English word is dropped like filth, spat out in unbelonging. In spite, and because of, its own soiled existence, the word becomes a stab of insightful light into this darkness, this trauma, in her childhood - a crack of light that briefly offers illumination into the possible actuality of what is otherwise not seen, a trace reference which briefly invokes trauma itself. When she speaks of running to her friends when her father was drunk at home she uses another English word, 'despondency'. This word, 'despondency', like the word 'disgusting', rises from her speech, reverberating with linguistic difference among the Afrikaans in which the rest of her testimony is given. In her testimony of these events associated with the everyday traumas of life with an alcoholic father, she chooses to use only three words in English; 'Daddy', 'disgusting', and 'despondency'. Significantly, English was the language her father spoke, and at his insistence, it was the language the family members had to speak in their home.

In "Against the Concept of Cultural Trauma", Wulf Kansteiner and Harald Weilnböck suggest the possibility of reading "survivor testimony [by] looking for the traces of the 'absent presence'" (2008: 233). 'Daddy', her father as drunkard, is the absent presence within the trauma he created and inflicted upon his family, and within my grandmother's testimony she moves around the trauma with only a disgusting stab and a despondent squeak at the absent presence that is her father and the inexpressible (unknowable?) extent of the trauma that he embodies for her. Their father did not allow them to speak to him in Afrikaans, even though their mother was Afrikaans as well as all their close relatives and friends. In her interview with me, my grandmother speaks but a few words in her father's language: disgusting,

despondency, Daddy. This is a potently telling concatenation of words, a jarring undermining of a child's conventional naming of a father ('Daddy') through association with negative coding that signals the revulsion of dirt, and emotional damage. My grandmother's own assumed mother-tongue though, as she experiences through her mother's influence, is Afrikaans, not English. Her father's mother tongue is not *her* mother tongue language; it is as if the English words are spoken 'from her mouth to his ears', a form of obligatory authority tribute paid to him. In these words the powerful authority of his presence is piercingly implied. The unsayable and unsaid is revealed not within language but through the use of a specific language; the trauma becomes visible more through my grandmother's choice of language she expresses herself in than the specific words she uses.

In "Canon and Archive" Aleida Assman speaks of "'non-archival systems of transfer' and 'indigenous embodied practices as a form of knowing as well as a system for storing and transmitting knowledge'" (2008: 105). Hiding in their mother's room, all huddled about her in the lamplight, and running to her friends where the younger of the two girls dances in the dust: these oblique actions *around* the trauma of her father's alcoholism, are what my grandmother's testimony of familial trauma consists of. Hiding. Huddling. Dust dancing. These embodiments are held in her archive, physically displacing the traumatising drunken violence committed by her father. Assman further explains that "oral culture, cultural memory that is stored in embodied practices and live performances is kept within human limits" (2008: 105). The accounts of embodied being that my grandmother speaks of are the ways through which she survived and stored the traumas of her childhood. Her testimony hardly completes one account before she tries to move on, under pressure, to remember to forget that which she wishes not to express. Her inner and outer speech are in disjuncture, the split disrupting the articulation I have asked of her in order to make present aspects of her childhood trauma, but which she clearly still uses erratically as a means to fill the absence of answers that my interview questions are probing into presence. These embodied practices as they are simultaneously

revealed and hidden through her testimony are her archive, an archive "kept within human limits" (Assman, 2008: 105). It is an archive where "trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival" (Caruth, 1996: 58). My grandmother's archive is both what she survives and how she survives.

L

M/other

And silence, like a poultice, came

To heal the blows of sound

Pear, 1922: 30

In "Witnessing the Archive: In Mourning" Robert's states:

> To bear witness is also an archival technology [...] but like testimony the archive is the site of a lacuna, a threshold, since testimony as a performative utterance takes place between what is said and unsaid – even between the sayable and unsayable.
>
> (2006: 44)

However, it is also extremely important to distinguish between what is unsaid and what is really unsayable, since very different motivations and intentions inform these acts of bearing witness, and the acts are performed in different ways. Theorising within the context of psychologists' interviews, Rogers et al argue that languages of the unsayable and unsaid take various forms, one of which is the 'Language of Silence'. Here, silence "hints at the forbidden or taboo knowledge and a fear of speaking" (1999: 89). This language of silence can be spoken by more than one person when such silence is shared and perpetuated – this is illustrated by the events that took place when my mother shared her testimony, her silence, with me, and my subsequent choices about whether to incorporate these into my research. In my mother's testimony she decided to share what had been, up until that

very moment, unsayable and unsaid. Indeed, for her the matter still remains unsayable, yet she *said* it to me... and now it has become unsayable to me as well. Now we share this language of silence, a language where we do not speak our words but carry them, the weight of them, while our shoulders ache and our mouths are still. In researching this doctoral project I have come to carry others' words, the words of generations and people I didn't know or knew very little of. I carry the knowledge of places I haven't been and events in which I did not participate. As Friedrich Nietzsche observes,

> [W]e are the outcome of earlier generations, we are also the outcome of their aberrations, passions, and errors, and indeed of their crimes; it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain. If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves as free of them, this does not alter the fact that we originate in them.
>
> (as cited in Blustein, 2008: 13)

We unwittingly originate in others' corruption and atrocities, and because of such compromised origins we, in my family, learn to speak many 'languages'. I oscillate between Afrikaans and English, living and writing, love and academia, poetry and critique, visual and written, writer and daughter... between words and everything that exists where words cannot go. And then there is the lacuna between the unsaid and unsayable - this we do not speak; this is a language you carry, bear, clutch, transfer, contain, hold, and withhold.

I cannot write my mother's testimony, though the weight is slowly forming wounds. I cannot unburden myself of this for it is not my load I am carrying and therefore not my testimony to give. But it has become my testimony to archive. How am I to do this?

Among all the languages I speak and unspeak there exists another/an other language of lineage - the language of mother and daughter. As Marianne Hirsch suggests, the daughter speaks "two languages at once [...] [the] mother-daughter language exists only in brief moments of interruption and

silence within the pervasive fabric of the symbolic"[17] (Hirsch, 1989: 45). Thus daughters learn from their mothers to manage and perpetuate a second language that interrupts yet does not disturb the predominant and patriarchal language of the family narrative. Keeping silent on important aspects of my mother's testimony might seem to stay within the bounds of patriarchal archival secrecy because it interrupts but does not disturb yet I argue that such silences can be interpreted in more Kristevan ways. I link Hirsch's concept of a mother-daughter language to Julia Kristeva's argument that femininity is assigned to a point of origin: "[t]he privileged relationship of women to that origin gives them access to an archaic form of expressivity outside the circuit of linguistic exchange" (2002: 63). The language of exchange that exists between my mother and me, for example, in its silence and its quick-slow movement, belongs to this elusive other origin, emanating from some archaic place. Because I speak this complex mother-daughter language, that in this instance entails the language of silence, I cannot write about my mother's testimony, and the events it revealed. I choose to perpetuate this language, and thus I will continue the silence and keep the secret. I will not 'write' about that which the silence holds/hides however I will write and archive the silence in it because it comes from, and is created by this very female archive. Derrida writes that:

> Some archive has been, forever, destroyed. Not simply as documents, but simply people have disappeared. And the pain, or the violence, on many sides cannot be recorded in an archive... The disappearance, the death or the killing or the forgetting or simply the impossibility just to testify to what happened. So, there was a radical destruction at the centre of the experience to be recorded, to be archived, so to speak".[18]

[17] Marianne Hirsch discusses this mother-daughter language as it was observed within the Victorian period. I borrow her concept for my own context of discussion and application yet I do not explore the particular forms of the mother/daughter language as discussed in this Victorian context.

[18] In this seminar by Jacques Derrida (at the University of Witwatersrand, August 1998), he is speaking about the archive in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. I am very aware of the particular post-apartheid context of his arguments, yet I believe they may be extrapolated and applied to a very different scenario.

(Van Zyl, 2002: 50)

In no traditional way can I archive what my mother testifies. People have departed. Sites have changed or disappeared. Even beyond these verifiable facts is the emotional truth to which her narrative attests: that the pain and violence suffered and committed are almost unspeakable. But I will still proceed, even given these impossibilities, to attempt to document in the name of that which cannot be documented. In a sense, then, this is a testimony in *place of* the testimony that cannot be given, in place of the inability ever to fully testify, an other kind of testimony which helps to bring into being an other kind of archive. Consider, for example, how I treat this alternative testimony in the section marked 'l, s, w' (pp. 54-61), in the artist's book. Here I elude the pressures of direct representation of this testimony by using excerpts from my mother's writing in her childhood school books. These cross-reference to elements of her testimony, specifically sensory aspects (such as sounds/*klanke*). Additionally, I ask my readers to understand that I chose to use her handwriting because it is a *material* form of her expression. The physical rendering of the lines and shapes that constitute the words acquire for me an embodied significance that reaches beyond the meaning of the words – this is further emphasised by using the word *woorde* which means words in Afrikaans. While it is my agency as artist that creatively prompts the suggested connections between these words and her testimony, the tactile appeal is that the words as visual objects are rendered by her hand, enabling the words to serve as image or visual sign, and not just as verbal language. In the artist's book, the images of the words are combined with images that relate to objects in my female family archive. Among these is her father's overcoat that is discussed in the fourth chapter. In addition, there are images of objects and interactions with these objects, such as my mother's mother's bed as well as the bed linen, and these objects are also discussed in chapter four. My discussion of these objects aims to establish an ongoing connection between my mother and her parents so as to suggest the complexity of these relationships, the use of the same section that relates to various areas in the thesis also, I hope, subverts

any facile linearity. Such interconnectedness is continued in section 'c, d, p, w' (pp. 111-117), with the photograph of the page in a book with only the word 'silence' on it. Scale is used to show the texture of the paper to create the link between paper and skin that surface more clearly in chapter three. This complexity of relationships (its ability to move through linear time in ways not only sequential) is strongly established by employing the letters of the alphabet. The alphabet functions as apparently familiar index and guide to reading and sense-making, and yet I undermine any assumptions of linearity as well as clear, or full, representation by creating many possible connections to a single letter as one can see in the index where each letter of the alphabet refers to more than one page as well as some of the letters referring to no page. This can be confusing, I admit. And yet it is a richly generative perplexity that aptly speaks to the tangled convolutions of the materials with which I am working, in terms of content, of concept, and of mediums.

In returning to my mother's testimony I want to look at the act of repression in order to consider how this impacts the mother-daughter language of silence. In *Archive Fever* Derrida writes that "repression is an archivization", This view liberates the forgotten and silenced, the unsayable and unsaid; most importantly it frees trauma to the extent that it offers trauma a place in which to 'exist' and be expressed (1995: 43). I want to approach Derrida's statement that "repression is archivization" from a slightly different and inverted angle, arguing that from such a perspective archivization could also be viewed as repression. This then to imply that to archive is also an act of internalising and by doing so the archive moves from a public to a private and the interior locale… We are now, through this labyrinthine series of moves, with/in the female archive.

Within the interior female archive the relationship between private and public is complex because privacy often demands secrecy and silence. Derrida suggest that "[it] is thus, in this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public,

which does *not* always mean from the secret to the nonsecret" (1995: 10). Within the process of my research there is a movement from the private to the public or the "secret to nonsecret". In this case, the secret is shared yet only to a very limited extent. It is shared merely within the confines of the female family archive because the archive teaches and requires that it remains secret. Thus the secret only moves to the non-secret in certain instances *within* the female archive yet it is never fully apparent to anyone outside our archive, in this case, for example, to you as reader. These complexities become evident in my mother's testimony concerning the events surrounding her father's death. Though she shared this with me in my interview with her, fully aware of what the interview was intended for and that I was taping her, she asked me afterwards not to make the secret she had shared known. The secret had to remain in our archive. In this section of the dissertation, then, I share, with her consent, aspects of the interview with you – but I will keep the secret. In this instance I am partaking in this female archive as a family member first and secondarily as a scholar and writer of this doctoral text. In the interview transcription reproduced below, I decided to employ both the ellipses and sections of empty space so that the secret continues to elude revelation, and yet is made visible to the reader. This is my creative attempt to express the silence without filling it, while still adhering to my ethical boundaries as both academic and daughter.

Ek: Toe Ma hom [haar pa] gegroet het, toe ons weg is, het Ma gedink Ma groet hom nou finaal?

Ma: Ek dink ek het dit in 'n mate, ek dink ek wou dit nie aan myself erken nie maar hy was baie, baie siek.

E: Hoe was daai laaste vakansie daar?

M: [Haar stem baie sag, soos 'n kind se stem] ...dit was nie lekker nie. [stilte]

E: Was hy toe al baie siek?

M: Ja, en dis toe wat hy uhm... [sy sug],

…en uhm, ek het wakker geword en dit gehoor...

en uhm [stem nog sagter nou]…

…hierdie stryd in my, sal ek gaan, of sal ek dit nie doen

... en uhm… dit het sy einde beteken, want dit was wintertyd...

…ek het dit nog nooit vir iemand vertel nie.

E:

M:

E:

M:

…dit was daai respek, ek kon dit nie aan hom doen nie…

E:

M:

E:

M:

E:

M:

…Dis op haar [haar ma] gewete, niemand het nog ooit hieroor gepraat nie, nie ek met haar nie nie sy met my nie, sy het dit vir niemand erken nie…

… omdat ek hom respekteer en sy regte respekteer want dit is hoe hy was, hy sou dit nie wou gehad het nie…

E:

M:

E:

M:

E: Wanneer het dit uitgekom dat hy drink?

M: Ag ek weet nie so geleidelik het ons agtergekom en het sy [haar ma] nou maar gesê. Dis maar saans wat hy gedrink het, maar ek dink tog hy het later soos sê nou maar middae al ietsie gevat. Soos ek sê hy was nooit besope gewees nie, nooit, nie eers amper nie.

E: Wat het tannie P** en O*** daaroor gesê, het julle daaaroor gepraat?

M: Huh uh, nee.

E:

M: …dit was hoogstens hoogstens vyf jaar van sy lewe waarvan hy dit [alkohol] vir seker net drie [jaar] misbruik het…

E:

M:

… hy het vir ons gewag,

…En toe sit my ma langs my pa se bed, hier voor by hom, sy het darem toe sy hand vasgehou, en toe het iets net vir my gesê ek wil nou hier by hulle wees – [sy begin huil] - ons was lank alleen jy weet, ons drie was maar altyd alleen in die huis [my ma was 12 en 16 jaar jonger as haar twee susters]. En toe het ek daar by hulle gaan sit en sy hand gehou, en daar bly sit tot hy dood is. Toe het hy so half... en toe roep ek vir Oom G**** [haar swaer wat 'n mediese dokter is], toe het hy sy oë kom toemaak…

E:

M:

E:

M: …ek weet ons het jou [ek was op daai stadium 5 jaar oud] gehou dat jy hom kan groet jy sou dit doen, jy was so kind, jy was net 'n anderste soort kind.[19]

(Personal interview, March 2010)

In light of my mother's testimony I refer to Butler again, who states that: "in the innermost blindness of love, that must remain oblivious, lives a demand not to be blinded[…] Very often what we call 'love' involves being compelled by our own opacity, our own places of unknowingness, and, indeed, our own injury" (2005: 102-103). Familial love requires a certain amount of oblivion in order for the family to stay intact; this entails looking away from deviant behaviour, actions and events that might threaten the stability of the family unit. Familial love, then, also enables familial violence and trauma. In looking away a complicated state of blindness is created, for we blind ourselves in order not to be blinded by that from which we are averting our eyes. Thus the family member protects both the self and the family as a whole but this also creates a certain amount of protection for the perpetrator and the trauma he/she commits. At the core of my female family archive there is a constant struggle between unknowing and knowing, for to know, to see, means there is no return to the state of oblivion. To see is to

[19] Translation: Me: Was he [her father] very ill by then? My mother: Yes, and it was then that he uhm… [she sighs]… and uhm that was his end because it was wintertime… I have never told this to anybody. M: … MM: … M: … MM: …it was that respect, I couldn't do it to him… M: … MM: … M: … MM: … M: … MM: …That is on her [her mother] conscience, no one has ever spoken about this, not me with her nor she with me, she never admitted it to anyone… because I respect him and his rights because that's how he was, he wouldn't have wanted it. M: … MM: … M: … MM: … M: When did it come out that he drank? MM: Oh I don't know, gradually we noticed it and she [her mother] would tell us. It was at night that he drank, but I do think later he would say start drinking a little something in the afternoon. Like I say he was never drunk, never, not even almost… M: What did aunt P** and O*** say, did you talk about it? MM: Huh-uh, no. M: … MM: … it was at the utmost, the utmost, five years of his life and he only abused it[alcohol] for three[years]… M: … MM: … he waited for us… and then my mother sat next to my father's bed, in the front next to him, she at least held his hand then, and then something just told me I want to be there with them at that moment [she starts crying], we were alone for a long time you know, the three of us were always alone in the house [because my mother was twelve and sixteen years younger than her two sisters she was raised almost as an only child]. And then I went to sit there with them and held his hand, and stayed there until he died. Then he sort of… and then I called Uncle G**** [my mother's brother in law who is a medical doctor] - he came and closed his [her father's] eyes. .. M: … MM: … M: … MM: …I know we held you [I was 5years old at the time] so that you could say goodbye to him, you would do it, you were that type of child, you were just a different type of child.

be scarred, and remain scarred. The events my mother testifies to have injured her and in turn her testimony has injured me, embodying Cathy Caruth's observation about "the complex ways that knowing and not knowing are entangled in the language of trauma" (1996: 4). In my female family archive the struggle between looking away and being blinded is most acute where trauma is concerned because the wounds rendered remain – there is no unseeing.

I hear her story, brought up from the deep;

the story is old, folded,

struggling to adjust to the light.

The words she is speaking –

the cold, so many ways of cold.

How can we commit such horrific things while loving each other?

And it's not just this story,

not just her story,

there are other stories - I know -

there exists a rhythm that seems to taunt,

a symmetry that can appear obscene...

...enecsbo raeppa nac taht yrtemmys a

Why after all the silence and all the years –

why tell me?

why silence me?

Were you lonely in your knowing

and unknowing;

lonely in your pain?

Such is the violence

of words and silence

while loving

while living

in a family.

This is how our female archive works, this domicile of innards is what we in/habit and what inhabits us. Butler writes that "[a]lthough we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own [...] living in a world of beings who are, by definition, physically dependant on one another, physically vulnerable to one another" (Butler, 2004: 26-27). Through our bodies we exist in relation to each other and pass through each other. We may seem coherent, contained, but both macro and micro elements of our embodiedness pass through, relationally, the bodies of others, in the form of sounds, touches, glances, moistures, cells. All that glances off our hands, ears, retinas, nostrils, mouths, thoughts...complex passageways.

There are many passages within the female archive; for me the passage of my mother's birth canal was the first of these. It is the corridor from which I came, the channel through which I pushed from the interior and private to the exterior and public. Yet the expeditions between private and public are not a linear finitude of here/there, or then/now, but an endless and constantly intertwined processual. In another form of passage, perhaps the

testimony that my mother gave has made its way from silence and repression to the emancipation of voice. From her archive of the unsayable her testimony was said and made its way to my pinna past the hammer, the anvil and the stirrup to my cochlea... And yet what she has said remains held within me. I keep silent about the secret - holding it within the female family archive. This silence I know, I carry. This silence will remain enfolded, and untold.

I

Grand/daughter

"And the pain, or the violence,

on many sides cannot be recorded in an archive"

(Van Zyl, 2002: 50)

Pain and violence do not exist merely as concepts of cause and effect, aligned neatly with perpetrator and victim. There are many sides to the intricate complexities of these effects, especially as they exist within the family. Familial trauma means that there is always a strong connection between perpetrator and victim; one is related not merely by blood but by love. These complexities multiply when one considers the fact that victim and perpetrator are also related to each other's loved ones, which means that the pain flows in many directions and impacts many lives. Because the pain and violence, both inflicted and endured within the family, converge in such complex ways, these effects or actions might not be able to be recorded in a public or exterior archive. Nevertheless, pain and violence do not occur without leaving an imprint and these impressions collect; they gather like water or birds; flowers or hair. There is, however, a difference between a record and an imprint, as Jill Bennett argues, suggesting that Holocaust or war testimonies "rather than narrativising traumatic experience, are seen as bearing the imprint of trauma" (2003: 28). Narrativising trauma on a basic level means writing or 'telling' the event/s, and within such acts of narrativising the notion of the record necessarily comes into play, in one form or another. Dictionaries conventionally describe 'a record' as a permanent account of facts and events given in writing to be documented for

later reference. The record is also a method with which to mark, measure and indicate. An impression, by contrast, is described as a deep and lasting effect on the mind, body and emotions. It can take the form of an idea, opinion, appearance or effect. An impression can also be a mark left by pressing an object hard into a surface, even a skin. Tellingly, too, the act of 'imprinting' is described as the learning process in which young animals recognise and develop a strong attachment to members of their own species/family. For my own project the difference between a record and an imprint implies the important difference between the public/exterior and private/interior archive: the former holds records that are intentionally and primarily constituted by, in and with language. The private archive, however, while inevitably mediated by language as thought and expression, consists of sensory, cognitive and physical imprints that are made in and with the body (as flesh, mind, consciousness…). These imprints are gathered and held as impressions, feelings, effects and attachments that are marked on the body but also within the synaptic spaces of the body understood as the psychic apparatus. Imprints are the qualities through which we bear the impossible-to-bear marks of familial pain and violence; qualities that cannot be recorded in the public archive but always already reside in the private archive of skin, bone, sense and feeling. In this, the witness herself becomes a partly private archive. In writing about the act of testimony William Robert examines the nature of the witness:

> [T]he instant of testimony – that point of rupture in which the witness cannot abide – what makes the archive possible is also what destroys it. Hence the archive is from its beginning a crypt, a place of ghosts and spectres amid ashes. As such the witness stands as the remnant that remains […]
>
> (2006: 47)

The archive is inevitably its own undoing as it is always, even at best, a haunted spectral place of cinders, in which the witness is the frail vestigial remainder. Paradoxically, this remnant is then what stands as the reminder

of archiving, morphing into the archive itself since the witness herself embodies the archive. Such 'impossibility' is what gives rise to the interior and private archive, which exists where the logic of language ruptures; it is the hollow, the enfolded annex where pain reaches but language does not. Cixous might venture that this archive is an alcove older than testimony, older than words, where the missing body lies in its original foetal position.

In his article "Witnessing the Archive: In Mourning" Robert, referring to Giorgio Agamben, contends that "[w]riting, trace, hymen[…] each of these names demonstrates the rupture between language and the human user of language, pointing to an 'impossibility of conjoining the living being and language[…] The inhuman and the human' in testimony" (2006: 43). Writing, like testimony, is never simply a capture in language – it will always be a point of rupture that marks the underlying and inevitable impossibility of fully expressing that which is in need and want of expression and, through this, often deliverance. The women in my family (and perhaps, by extension, women in similar family situations who can relate to the testimonies in our female archive) are in need of expression as well as deliverance, struggling to relate and affirm our humanity but also the inhumanity of what we know.

To overcome the lacunae. To grant the inevitability of the hole in the whole. This is the painful difficulty of testimony and trauma, which seldom exist separately yet also seldom manage to meet each other face-to-face. Trauma finds its expression within the rupture of testimony and language. Bennett argues that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (2003: 35). The convoluted relationship between trauma and testimony is exacerbated when the trauma stems from violence against a child, and in some cases such trauma returns to the child as an adult as a knowing of an unknown, yet a knowing that in itself cannot be un-known, however hard one might try to accomplish this. The authors of "An Interpretive Poetics of the Unsayable" suggests that:

> a child trying to articulate a memory that is unsayable [...] longing for words to express a memory that is not known fully. She or he may also revise or erase what is recalled because some aspects might be too dangerous, or simply too hard, to know. What is unsayable lie just under the surface of conscious knowing, whereas what is unspeakable exists as a deep and haunting sense of something present that begs for words but that is also absolutely forbidden to be spoken.
>
> (Rogers et al.: 1999: 86)

In childhood for many years

flash/ es would come to me

as though shots fired from a gun .

I was struck

by what I knew

I didn't know

haunted by this

strange

spectral

presence.

This presence I now view as my own interior archive that was begging for expression, formation. The scholarship attests to the validity of such thinking. Cathy Caruth, for example, speaks of the "complex ways that knowing and not knowing are entangled in the language of trauma" (1996: 4). For "history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential

precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs[…] a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (1996: 18). This reminds me of my situation as I grew older, as I became more sexually active, and I slowly came upon the knowledge of my own unknowing about my family. But I was stranded; there was no way for me to know, there was no record, there was no (public) archive. My own emerging, stuttering, fledgling history that haunted and harassed me was not easily accessible. I could not fathom or access what I slowly came to know I didn't know. As Butler notes, "[m]oments of unknowingness about oneself tend to emerge in the context of relations to others, suggesting that these relations call upon primary form of relationality that are not always available to explicit and reflective thematization" (2005: 20). The unknowingness was within me, it was my own but it was also relational - bound in familial and sinister ways that seem to habitually pleat like the fold of a dress or fire bellow.

Within my middle class, white South African family, generations of women have become victims of the vulnerability that Butler refers to as a "part of bodily life" through the fact that as we as human beings are "given over to each other" (2004: 28-29). This vulnerability increases considerably within the construct of the family, meaning, thus, that there is no better place for violence to pace than within the confinement of familial love. In *Moments of Being* Virginia Woolf writes about her own experience as child of being vulnerable, of her body being 'given over':

> I remember resenting; disliking it […] It must have been strong since I still recall it. This seems to show that a feeling about certain parts of the body; how they must not be touched; how it is wrong to allow them to be touched ; must be instinctive. It proves that Virginia Stephen was not born on the 25th January 1882, but was born many thousands of years ago; and had from the very first to encounter instincts already acquired by thousands of ancestresses in the past. And this throws light not merely on my own case, but upon the problem I touched on the first page; why it

> is so difficult to give any account of the person to whom things happen.
>
> (1985: 69)

Woolf's remarks lead me to appreciate that the body has its own ways, its own knowledges, gathered over bodies in time and of time. Bodies are themselves, but they are also located within ancestral lineages or inherited constellations, giving rise to forms of unknowingness that are yet intuitively known. But what happens to the knowledge of/from/within the body? What happens to the knowledge of the child who does not have the language to create a narrative of her experience? In my thinking, influenced by the scholarship on which I draw, these ways and kinds of knowing reside within the interior archive - this *is* the private archive. In the Derridean sense of the archive (the 'public and exterior' archive[20]), the knowledge and unknowledge of the body (particularly the body of the child), cannot be archived. For twenty six years I felt that my pain had no place to exist, and I did not know what to do with fragmented memories and bodily sensations that did not fit into a narrative, or have an explanation, or a resolution. I did not know what to do with the constant reminders of the unknowingness about myself. My body held the violence of a perpetrator who had long since died, leaving no witnesses but myself and I could only remember a child's fragments and sensations. Where and how does one 'record' such broken affects? I have found that there is no where and no how; there are aspects of human life that simply cannot be 'recorded' in the traditional sense. And yet this is not to deny the enduring existence of these aspects/fragments/sensations. They exist as imprints, physically, on the body and mind, collecting within the deep interior of the psyche which accumulates felt meaning as the interior of the private archive.

[20] Recall my earlier citing: an *archive has to be public*, even if it is hidden provisionally or appropriated by someone. It belongs to the concept of the archive that it be public, precisely because it is located. You cannot keep an archive inside yourself – this is not archive. Because of the exteriority that I mentioned at the beginning, an archive has to be public (Van Zyl, 2002: 48).

The last of the three sections of testimony centres on my testimony of being molested by a family member as a child. In this segment the writer of the text/I is split in a discernible way, and this expands on both the reader's and writer's awareness of her various roles and also continues to disperse the concept of the 'I' within memory/biography/history/society. The section is situated within the understanding that trauma is often unsayable in the sense that it is, for various reasons, not possible to narrate, to write or record. Yet trauma never occurs without leaving an imprint, and I write – I archive - from the imprint itself. This finds expression in my own testimony but also in more delicate interactions with rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and page space.

What follows is my own testimony of my childhood trauma at the hands of a family member. The sexual abuse lasted for four years but I only started to recall it from the age of fifteen, and even then only partially. The memories have remained, but fragmented. They are at once sensory and abstract. They stubbornly resist while just as stubbornly persist. I find it necessary to refer again to *Parting Embrace* by Dennis Del Favero, Bennett writes that the work "seeks to register the pain of abuse by physical imprint[…] the work does not aim to transcribe sense memory into common memory, but offers only fragments of memories written on to the body." She continues: "[t]he eye can often function as a mute witness through whom events register as eidetic memory images imprinted with sensation" (2003: 30, 31). My own memory has never aimed to transcribe; it offers merely resistant sensory fractures that stubbornly endure so as to register and reverberate as a presence of pain rendered on the skin and imprinted in the psyche. My body houses this trauma.

At the age of thirty, after twenty two years, I went back to the house where my abuse took place for the first time. This is my testimony of what I experienced on this day:

> When I go out on the back stoep I am overwhelmed it is as though an old imprint within my body has been activated, my body and senses are

> reacting without the guidance of my memory. This visceral experience independent of recollection becomes the primary experience.
>
> This courtyard somehow always managed to remain damp - all around the land is dry; brittle horrible heat, and desiccated cracking cold - but in here it's moist and dank, the ground is dark and covered with crumpled foliage and there is the constant smell of overripe rotten fruit.
>
> All of this meets my body... it enters through the circles of my eyes the hollows of my nose the passages between nostril, throat, tongue and mouth.
>
> (My personal testimony)

In *Precarious Life* Butler writes that we are "undone by each other [...] the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch and to violence" (2004: 23, 26). In *Giving an Account of Oneself* she explains that "we are in our skins, given over, in each other's hands, at each other's mercy. This is a situation we do not choose" (2005: 101). We definitely cannot choose what family we are born into and we are never as potentially exposed to others as we are in the family, especially as children.

> The sun is visible throughout the room, it's tangible. The dust, made of skin, is elevated and floats around me. The light is old, older than what my body knows. This empty room hoards much pain. Not just my pain. Possibly the pain of his grandchildren, children, wife... but possibly also his pain[21]. But this is not the worst place.
>
> (My personal testimony)

In *The Aesthetics of Sense Memory* Bennett refers to skin in a different way:

[21] Only after this visit did I learn that this is where my perpetrator, an older family member, grew up – I often wonder if the pain I became aware of was the abuse he suffered as a child in the same house.

> Delbo said that her Auschwitz self was encased in the skin of memory so that it could not touch her now. But the skin of memory is notoriously permeable – particularly the skin of traumatic memory, which is at once 'tough' and 'impervious' […] but also broken, ruptured and scarred. In dreams she wrote: Sometimes … it bursts and gives back its contents …. I see myself again … just as I know I was …. and the pain is so unbearable[…]
>
> (2003: 36)

Here skin is used as an 'encasement', it is the skin enclosing memory, traumatic memory, and this skin seems to keep the memory of what happened to the literal skin of the body at some distance. But the skin of memory is just as vulnerable as the skin of flesh; the skin of memory, specifically traumatic memory, is 'ruptured' just like writing and testimony has proven to be. It seems we have followed the rupture from language to testimony and now onto the skin of traumatic memory. When I went back to that house my skin 'burst and gave back its contents', aglow with handprints and gazes - burning like phosphor right on the epidermis.

> I walked on from the tree toward the back, where the outside buildings were. There was a small 'hallway' that formed in front of the three rooms. The first one on the right hand side: there my breath drew back into my body and huddled itself. There it was, there it all was, it all had been... the sparse stabs and flashes of memory. These were not suddenly strung together in a clear narrative of pain but as I walked there my entire body ached, every orifice from the sockets of my eyes to the pit of my womb. There my body, my very skin began to reverberate with its own knowledge.
>
> (My personal testimony)

I return to Derrida as he argues that the archive's "cutaneous marks seems to defy analysis. It accumulate so many sedimented archives, some of which

are written right on the epidermis of a body proper[…] Each layer here seems to gape slightly, as the lips of a wound[…] destined for archaeological excavation" (1995: 19). I feel that these 'sedimented archives' are layers of impressions that we carry on our skin, but they are marked, drawn rather than written. The imprints I carry on/in my body belong to a child, were collected by a child and will not deliver themselves to narrative or language. This is an interaction with the body/on the body which forms hollows, abrasions, discolorations and often the rupture of an open wound, a wound, or wounds, that should be understood in other ways, I thus turn to Caruth; "[T]he Greek *trauma*, or 'wound', originally referring to an injury on the body. In its later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's text, the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (1996: 3). I have come to find that testimony is ruptured; the skin of memory can rupture into a wound analogous to the wounds that pierce the physical epi/dermis in acts of trauma. Since the very word 'wound' refers to an injury caused by trauma either to the body or the mind, in order to speak (properly) of trauma one must speak from the wound, or from the composite of traumatic wounds and ruptures. Yet speaking from the wound is not a simple solution, for as my phrasing suggests, and as my discussion implies, there is not just one wound. For when it comes to trauma, there are many layers of 'many sedimented archives' that seem to 'defy analysis'. In relation to my creative project: because speaking from the wound is such a complex and impossible task with so many overlapping (and interrupted) layers, the section 'd, g, I, r, s, t', in my artist's book suggests aspects of wounding with the use of photographs of a page in a book with the words scratched out, a close-up of a button hole in a blouse and a torn-open envelope (pp. 62-71). Skin and wound are suggested by a photograph of the worn tapestry on a chair, as well as an image that seems to be almost abstract, soft pink hues and textures yet on studied observation reveals itself to be a close up of the skin of a slaughtered pig. The only image of a body is a cropped photograph of my mother's legs when she was a child. The images reach beyond obvious and clear connections where skin and wounds are represented by objects

rather than bodies. In both the artist's book as well as in the scholarly research text, it should be clear, I do not aim to analyse or to record a comprehensive account of trauma. I want merely to give these wounds some form of expression, while granting that this expression will always be inadequate, only a creative suggestion of that which eludes comprehension.

> I turned into the street between the house and the koppie [hill]; the sidewall of the garden had been heightened, but was still painted white. In the white wall was a giant hole. The old, red bricks had quietly turned to dust and slowly, organically, a puncture had grown in this pallid surface. Instead of climbing over the wall I chose to go through the red void. Inside it was already always there; the courtyard, the dampness, the altered light...
>
> (My personal testimony)

Bennett argues that the "poetics of sense memory involve not so much *speaking of* but *speaking out of* a particular memory or experience – in other words speaking from the body *sustaining sensation*" (2003: 33). This entire testimony is writing *out of* my body and the actual event was an instance of knowing *out of* the body and not out of the mind.

> The tree smelled rancid, like it pissed itself – I stood in front of it for a long while, my body remembering many things - I could just stand and let it... there was no use for thought, memory, or narrative. My body said 'yes, I was here... I heard this... I saw that shape, that light, felt that texture... I smelled those odours. I tasted... suffocated… swallowed'
>
> (My personal testimony)

my

feet

and legs

dang ling

stopping.

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breath,

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salt

Chapter Two

Anne

Introduction

Focus

I will begin in this chapter by narrowing my focus further to concentrate on one woman within my family. It is important to clarify that I explore as much the existence as the absence of this particular woman in order to discuss what this attention reveals about the complexities at work within my family and the community of the small town they lived in, which also reflects upon concepts of a broader South African society. In "'Black Holes' Sites for Self-Construction" Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen references Marianne Gullested arguing that "[p]eople live their lives and tell their stories within socially constructed conditions, but their actions and stories also have a potentially transformative impact on society" (1999: 48). Though Bjerrum Nielsen agrees with Gullestad's assertion she suggests that attention must be paid to what she refers to as "little narratives" and that this should include looking at people's emotions, lives and unconscious motivations as well (1999: 48-49). She underscores the importance of looking at the "unconscious structure', or what she refers to as the "black holes" of the text as well as the "conscious structure" urging that these aspects will have a greater impact on society (1999: 50-51). I suggest that Anne can be seen as one of these 'black holes', as an unconscious structure in these women's individual narratives as well as in the broader family narrative. By exploring Anne's partial presence as a conscious structure within these narratives *as well as* her substantial absence as the unconscious structure within these narratives one can see how Anne, serving as an embodied 'black hole' in her absence, is used to construct narratives of self and family.

With the emphasis on Anne in this chapter, I ask a reader to respond to the testimonies concerning a silenced and erased woman within my family

narrative so that her absence, as made known or presenced by others, can find a semblance of expression. Listen. Listen with me. Such a collaborative act might have a transformative impact that reverberates beyond this text and this particular female study, a broader impact that can serve as a contribution to scholarship, across disciplines, in paying closer attention to the study of peripheral, vanished and silenced groups or individuals.

Archive

Prior to my critical encounter with the notion of the archive, I viewed 'the archive' as merely a building, like a museum, which held and preserved historical documents in an organized fashion. My first awareness of the concept of 'archive' beyond the idea of an architectural construct undoubtedly was influenced, as I mentioned in the introduction, by Jacques Derrida's thoughts in *Archive Fever* (1995). My reading of this text led me to the rest of his work on the archive. At first Derrida's theorisation expanded the notion of the archive for me into a wide reach. However, for me as a woman, the archive soon became a restraining concept that symbolically revealed itself as a bureaucratic erection of patriarchal edifice. Derrida's work on the archive became that which I questioned and was conflicted by as well as the source from, and against, which I started to define and locate my idea of a divergent female archive. I was intrigued by the possibilities of a female archive as an 'alternative' archive - an amorphous and discrepant collection of affects and not only entities, rather than a construction. This female archive would, I envisaged, be an expansive creation of and by elements of the matriarchal, of women's private lives, and even of difficult-to-archive features such as feeling.

This said, I rely heavily on Derrida's theorisations within this chapter because in many instances these continue (obliquely and relationally) to inform my conceptualisation of a female archive. I introduce these conceptualisations in the present chapter, yet I will deviate from and move beyond them in the following chapters, in recognition of my own developing

understanding of 'the archive' *and* as a means of drawing attention to the shift in Derrida's own arguments on the archive in his later work. Notable are the shifts motivated by his participation in debates about 'refiguring' the archive[22] during his visit to South Africa in 1998 at the time of the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings which dealt, as mentioned, with testimonies of atrocities committed during apartheid. With this new turn in his work, his changing notions of 'archive' became once again a source *with* which, instead of against which, I could attempt to locate my female family archive. In addition, crucial here is that South African specifics have played a significant role in discourses of archival change and inclusion, reconceptualising the institution of the archive and of archival practice that informs my research. The actions, movements, and thoughts of South-African scholars prompted new and different ways of understanding and conceptualising the archive, placing an altered optic on Derrida's thinking *and* prompting his own reworking of this ideas. It is such reconfiguring of the Derridean concept of 'The Archive' that becomes integral to my argument in this chapter.

Bearing Witness

In this chapter I consider the act of *bearing* witness and how it operates within the archive. In doing so I concentrate on and expand the convoluted concept of the witness and the modes in which witnessing operate within the archive. In doing so I return to Robert's "Witnessing the Archive: In Mourning" in order to extrapolate further:

> to bear witness is also an archival technology […] It is a technology of remembering and of recording memory in the form of testimony. But like testimony the archive is the site of a lacuna, a threshold, since testimony as performative utterance takes place between the said and unsaid – even between the sayable and unsayable […]

[22] C, Hamilton & V, Harris (Eds). (2002). *Refiguring the Archive* (pp.135-160). Cape Town, David Philip Publishers.

> This points to testimony's ultimate unarchivability given its performative dimension.
>
> (2006: 44)

In Robert's text, we are introduced to two key concepts: *bearing witness* as an act of 'archival technology', a tool, a part of the machinery and *paying testimony*, defined as a problematic location that, amongst other things, accommodates the unsayable and the unsaid. I partially agree with Robert's distinctions; however, I propose that it is possible, to a certain extent, also to move beyond the 'unarchivability' of the oral characteristics around bearing witness as well as the silences of the unsayable and unsaid involved in paying testimony.

Literary and cultural critic, Assman refers to a new law in her article, "Canon and Archive*"*. She explains that UNESCO created a new category referring to "'intangible cultural heritage.' The new law of 2003 revalorized nonverbal forms of knowledge and protects a heritage that consists of practices, dances, rituals and performances" (2008: 105). This, in a very official manner, discounts Robert's claim that bearing witness as an act within the archive is unarchivable because of its performative dimension. However, while I value Assman's distinction as it gives more nuance to Robert's claims, in this chapter I would still like *further* to adapt Robert's concept of the witness and act of bearing witness as performed within the archive. I do this by referring to Giorgio Agamben, who notes:

> In Latin there are two words for "witness" […] *testis*, from which our word 'testimony' derives, etymologically signifies the person […] in trial […] between two rival parties, is in the position of a third party (*terstis). The second word, *superstes*, designates a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bear witness to it.
>
> (2002:17)

Robert's himself refers to Agamben, and elaborates on Agamben's notions, arguing that the one bearing witness is only a "witness by proxy", a "pseudo witness", who bears witness in the place of the true witness, the one who has experienced an event from beginning to end. Thus the true witness has in fact experienced this 'beginning to end' to the extent that this witness is the "complete witness who drowned". The witness is designated as a "remnant", an "archival figure" which leads Robert to conclude that the "archive is from its beginning a crypt, a place of ghosts and spectres" (2006: 46-47). Bearing witness is thus an archival act or technology of surrogacy for the true witness, the true witness who is an 'archival figure' that is only ever a spectre.

Thus the act of *bearing* the witness, serving as a surrogate for the true witness, always carries the absent presence of this spectre. To bear witness involves carrying a heavy load for though the true witness is an absent presence the spectre still transports a physical environment of origin, a history of lived life around other bodies, places, objects, events and rituals. Martin Heidegger confirms such modes of manifestation when he argues that "absence, too, manifests itself as a mode of presence" (1972: 17). He prefaces this by saying that "even that which is no longer present presences immediately in its absence—in the manner of what has been, and still concerns us. What has been does not just vanish […]" (1972: 13).

The lost witness, the spectre, as it is carried and conveyed by the surrogate witness, silently evinces many obscure and impenetrable testimonies as they exist as parts of the archive. In this chapter I use the term surrogate as a concept that encapsulates the idea of modes of substitution and representation, as it pertains to the discussions that follow surrogate refers to the witness as proxy for the true witness. In chapter three I will expand this concept to include both objects and places that serve in different ways as surrogates for people and interaction with people, focussing on how the women in my family create meaning and communicate with the use of surrogates within our archive particularly when navigating loss and trauma. In the third and fourth chapter the women in my female family archive will

thus be used as skilful surrogate witnesses who operate in the female archive through bearing the heavy load of the life of the absent, true spectral witness.

Closed Archive

In this chapter I concentrate on my grandmother and her sister, and my mother and her sisters bearing witness as surrogates to the life of a 'true witness' within our archive. This true witness, the one who has 'experienced the event from beginning to end', is my maternal grandfather's only sister, Anne. Anne, as I have stated, is the subject of this chapter. The women in my family have each revealed aspects of Anne in their testimonies, among them those drawn from childhood memories. I draw suggestive symbols from these accounts, and re-locate them creatively in order to reveal broader thematic aspects relevant to Anne's life and the way in which she has become situated in our female family archive. These themes reveal a slow, traumatic process of separation, ostracism and, eventually, total negation. In terms of family story, Anne is missing. She does not feature in our family stories – unless through the kind of probing questions I persisted in asking. Through their testimonies the five women I invoke thus become proxies and pseudo witnesses to Anne's spectral absence in our archive.[23] Within these testimonies I concentrate on a specific traumatic event in Anne's life as a teenager and how this triggered not only her onset of epilepsy but also a slow process of othering and eventual exclusion. Anne's choices as a young woman veer from the set norms and gender roles within the family and incur further separation and dismissal which eventually culminate in the family completely rejecting her. For many years Anne has been one of the

[23] It is important to note here that as these women become surrogates so do I, for I bear witness to their bearing witness. I am proxy to the proxy, a double surrogate, if you will. They are surrogates for the true witness, but I am the one to whom they are bearing witness. Through the knowledge I now have gathered I am not only, by extension, witness to the true witness but also to the proxies. Consequently I become a surrogate as well, and in this sense a 'double surrogate'. My enactment of the roles as writer, researcher, translator, daughter and granddaughter makes me a surrogate in every aspect of the process of doing this research and writing this dissertation.

biggest omissions in our family narrative and thus I look toward creating this female archive to uncover her and pull her from the periphery. I locate Anne, evoking her presences through her absence, within what I designate as the *closed archive*. Robert, relying on Agamben's concepts of the witness and testimony, writes that "the witness stands in the threshold between presence and absence, between speech and nonspeech" (2006: 46). I would like to expand on the simultaneous existence of concepts such as absence and presence and speech and nonspeech in order to look at ideas of open and closed, accessible and inaccessible, in relation to the archive. I argue that in order for something to be closed it must in the first place exist and have the ability to be open, and in order to be inaccessible the possibility of being accessible is necessary. Similarly the ability to be present and speak must exist in order for one to be absent and silen/t/ced. Analogously, something is closed when it is locked, bolted, barred, when it is made inaccessible - yet one cannot lock something that does not exist, as I stated, something has to be accessible, thus have the ability to be unlocked, in order to be rendered inaccessible. These dualities that exist at the core of the archive are dependent on each other and cannot be separated.

Derrida speaks of a concept that he calls the "messianic" which, for him, refers to the archive's "relationship to the future" and it is because of this quality, he argues, that an archive can never be closed (Van Zyl, 2002:46). I would like to continue by first addressing my own understanding and awareness of the future of the female archive this text aims to intimate. While we conventionally think of the archive as a locale which contains the past, of course the archive has a relationship to the future, and concerning my female family archive I am, through my perpetuation of the archive both as female within the archive as well as the writer and creator of this work, to a large extent its futurity. In the sense that I am aware of the fact that my female family archive is dependent on me as the projection of its preservation and continuation, I acknowledge this messianic quality of the archive. Yet the concept of the future as it relates to the archive is a complex aspect, it is this multifaceted nature that offers avenues of interpretation

that in my opinion does not exclude the possibility of a closed archive but rather facilitates it in many ways.

When discussing the concept of 'the future' Derrida refers to "the three doors of the future [that] come to resemble each other to the point of confusion" he follows this by asking "[w]hat is a door doing when it opens onto a door" and continues to describe the last of the three doors as taking the "form of a promise, the promise of a secret kept secret" (1995: 45-46). I argue that the concept of the future that is held within the archive does not exclude the ability of the archive to remain, in parts, closed. Derrida himself refers to this futurity within the archive as a door that opens onto another door, a door that represents the 'promise of a secret kept'. Thus I argue that these unopened entrances that mark the secrets that will remain secret/closed are the parts within the archive that can be referred to as a closed archive. The closed door is the absent made present, the mute articulation of the unspoken – the pledge of a secret kept.

From this perspective I find it very hard to abide by the notion of the archive that cannot be closed as this does not allow for the presence of the complex dualities that are fundamental to the archive, the witness and the act of testimony. The act or concept of being closed does not entail an absence of an archive; though the archive is inaccessible, the door closed, the secret unspoken, it still exists – this is absolutely vital in approaching this often interior and private female archive that holds many silences.

I elaborate on my assertion of the possibility of a closed archive through Robert, who continues by saying that "[t]o bear witness is, finally, an act of mourning" (2006: 47). Since he argues the archive to be a place of testimony, I contend that it is not unreasonable to surmise that through the act of bearing witness being viewed as an act of the archive, or an archival technology, the archive indeed is also an act of mourning. Derrida, too, proposes that "the work of the archivist is not simply a work of memory. It is a work of mourning" (Van Zyl, 2002: 54), and subsequently he invokes Freud: "a work of mourning, Freud would say, has to be limited in time – if

you want a work of mourning to be efficient, it has to come to an end at some point" (Van Zyl, 2002: 48). If the work of the archivist, which consists of the act of archiving and thus by extension the archive itself, can be described as an act of mourning, and (adhering to Freud's argument) acts of mourning can come to a close, I thus assert that the archive can be closed as well. I do not however agree that an act of mourning, and by extension thus the archive itself, 'should' necessarily come to a close in order to be efficient. I aver, rather, that it 'can' be closed. Because of the complex nature of aspects such as the witness and testimony, at its core the archive is rooted in contradiction and paradox – it is the domicile where opposites abide. Thus the archive remains open, even if at times just slightly ajar. This includes being open to the possibility and ability of fractions of itself being closed. (Even for those who insist that the archive cannot be other than closed, this implies that detractors must learn to accept – to *abide* – the otherwise unacceptable idea that usually cannot be abided: the archive is always factionally open.)

It is then within such a closed archive that I would like to start investigating my female family archive by investigating the women[24] bearing witness as surrogates by scrutinising their oral testimonies as acts of speech and nonspeech, presence and absence. My purpose is to find a semblance of access to Anne, a possible expression for Anne as the elusive witness who is nevertheless the true witness, drowned by time and neglect.

Unbearing

Anne is a rapidly vanishing and fading remnant - an elusive figure in my female family archive existing only as spoken word and image on paper. Of

[24] I find that it is important to note that some of the voices in the interviews will be speaking to us from the grave seeing that both my grandmother and her sister have died since my conversations with them. The very surrogates themselves have become specters within the archive and are thus rendered closed in their own right.

everything I have gathered in this archive; Anne presents as the most vulnerable and the closest to vanishing completely. She is the true witness that lived through it all and died alone, her only surviving brother even refused to attend her funeral. Because of this she is the witness that *can* actually abide in the rupture that is her own testimony. She remains in the tear, the split: her own testimony. I will seek Anne in the testimony of her proxies concentrating on hearing, seeing and reading the absent as present. This is in keeping with Robert's description of the witness as a "remnant" and the act of testimony as "a point of rupture in which the witness cannot abide" (2006: 46-47).

Anne is a true witness and a closed archive because her family designated her as such and has continued to create, manifest and uphold this ritualistic production of exclusion and erasure in relation even to the memory of Anne. Her obliteration was, and is, a conscious practice, at both the individual and family levels. Derrida is apt here. He claims that the archive "shelters itself from this memory which it shelters: which comes down to saying also that it forgets" (1995: 9). He continues to say, as I have referenced before, that "repression is an archivization" (Derrida, 1995: 43). The absent presence/s and even the repressed are archived – the archive shelters the memory to the extent that it also forgets – thus creating within the archive the closed archive. Yet Derrida[25] goes further, saying that "there is an erasure that doesn't keep the repressed thing in some other place, but which produces forgetting by remembering, so to speak" (Harris, 2002: 68). This observation suggests that the repressed is not only archived but that it does not necessarily have to *remain* in a repressed state within the archive.

As I will show, my family erased Anne through individual and collective acts of forgetting – in a sense practices of 'remembering to forget', yet Anne as repressed and closed archive can and does exist within a state where she can surface and presence. Forgetting by remembering means that we are in a sense always also unbearing as we bear witness. This is how I will find

[25] This comment relates to later in his career when he spoke at the University of Witwatersrand about the archive as it relates to the Truth and Reconciliation trials.

entrance to Anne: through the simultaneous unbearing of non-speech in the act of bearing witness.

Wounding

Firstly, bearing witness is based on something that a person was witness to, and this can happen in a variety of ways. You can become a witness by seeing something, hearing something or experiencing something, a sensory event carried through the body. These acts can happen directly or can be 'given over' from one witness to another via testimony thus creating witnesses in a secondary or removed capacity.

Secondly, we pay witness by 'taking the event in' – deciding to remember it, electing to embed and imprint this in/onto memory and consequently allowing it residence within the psychic interior as located within the interior archive that we keep within the self. This residency means that we decide to carry and convey this act of bearing. Paradoxically though, this 'decision' could even be made *un*consciously, especially in the context of childhood memories.

Thirdly, we have the act of bearing, the bringing forth and manifestation of this entire process which is the oral act of bearing witness. Yet, as remarked (referring to Robert) in the discussion of the closed archive, the act of bearing witness through testimony is a threshold act. My discussion will show that all three understandings of witnessing produce uncertain boundaries, and it is at the very edge, at the limen, where Anne resides. How can these women in my family, in their capacity as surrogates to Anne's life and the familial trauma it holds, truly 'bear' her pain, her violation, her wounds, within the orality of language? How can a true witness and her closed archive of the unknown ever really exist within the limits of the 'known' expression of oral testimony that is always entangled within language and narrative?

To find possible answers I refer to *Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* where Caruth mentions Freud's turn towards literature "to describe traumatic experience". She writes: "it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" that it bears upon understandings of trauma and perhaps serves as a mode in which to express traumatic experience (1996: 3). In my female family archive, however, the surrogates bearing witness are not writers of literature but rather renderers – in speech and in letter writing, for example - of a family narrative. Yet I assert that if one approaches these narratives as pieces of literature we might gain other accesses to both the known and the unknown. I consider a similar perspective voiced by Assman on the work of Toni Morrison:

> [Morrison] deals with the gaps in historical records and archives in yet another way; the gaps that she discovers are the wounds in memory itself, the scar of trauma that resisted representation and can only belatedly, long after the deeply destructive events, become articulated in the framework of a literary text.
>
> (2008: 106)

Considered from this perspective, it seems feasible to say that the narratives of the women in my female family archive are in some ways akin to literature as they also deal with the 'gaps' in their archive, in this case the lacuna that is Anne and her closed archive. In the context of familial trauma these witnesses are dealing not only with the physical and mental wounds rendered by the trauma itself but also with the wounds the trauma rendered as erasures and silencing in the narrative, and closures in the archive.

In her book *Country of my Skull* Antjie Krog writes about her act of witnessing as it pertained to the Truth and Reconciliation hearings in South Africa: "I wrap you in words so that the future inherits you. I snatch you from the death of forgetfulness. I tell your story, complete your ending" (1998: 27). Krog's words speak to me and can be applied as a fitting description of the acts of surrogacy through testimony undertaken by

women in my family. Yet it is also important to look at the complexities of wounds and wounding within the creation of the female narrative and archive through the act of bearing witness. Assman asserts that in one of Morrison's most powerful works, *Beloved*, the "imaginary literary supplement to historical memory is not a filling of the gap but a making of it" (2008: 106). Morrison works with such gaps because she views them as wounds, a traumatic scarring that resists representation. Merely to fill such gaps, simply to suture such wounds, would be to force representation towards closure, and suppress many aspects of the trauma. The women in my family serve as surrogates to the true witness but they are always also, to various degrees, complicit in creating and perpetuating the gaps surrounding trauma and violence within the family to which they testify. It is because these women have been part of a system that perpetuates the silences around trauma; I argue that a mere 'filling' of the gap will still entail the debilitating survival of suppressive narratives that silence.

In "Cracked Vases and Untidy Seams", Meg Samuelson makes a similar argument when she refers to Zoë Wicomb's fictional work, claiming that here we see how the endeavour to write the female protagonist's story "and create coherence out of her story is an act of violence" (2011: 70). In other words, there is a violence inherent in bearing witness to another's life and trauma and this is why I argue that it would be a corrupt act to 'suture' the wounds of familial trauma, and that we need, instead, to retain something of the elusiveness, the gaps, in order to do justice to that which cannot ever be fully known.

Now we are entering the very grayest/gravest of areas; you, as reader, should never forget that I am writing about a family I am part of. This bond is what Agamben, referring to Levi, refers to as the "gray zone":

> It is the zone in which the 'long chain of conjunction between victim and executioner' comes loose, where the oppressed becomes oppressor, and the executioner in turn appears as victim. A gray

> incessant alchemy in which good and evil, and along with them, all the metals of traditional ethics reach their point of fusion.
>
> (2002: 21)

It is within this zone that the family about whom I write - *my* family - is located. In this context the women bearing witness are not simply innocent proxies, they are also offenders. They are 'executioners' through the fact that they carried out, executed, the exclusionary rules of the narrative created and entrenched by the patriarchs in my family. No one comes out of the narratives of familial trauma unscathed or untainted. A family is responsible even in the least of ways, and its members must be aware of the atrocities they carry, and carry out. As I have said in Chapter One, Nietzsche asserts that since

> we are the outcome of earlier generations, we are also the outcome of their aberrations, passions, and errors, and indeed of their crimes; it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain. If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves as free of them, this does not alter the fact that we originate in them.
>
> (Nietzsche as cited in Blustein, 2008: 13)

It is because we as women in my female family originate from our family's earlier aberrations that I find it imperative to focus on the various complexities and contradictions at the core of the concept of *bearing* witness as they also reveal the complicity and complacency within these women's testimonies. In bearing witness, Anne is a weight we as women in this archive *carry*, that we suffer under as we *transport* her. She is something that we *convey*, something that we *birth* and bring into difficult *presence* in order for her to be made visible. This bearing witness is also a pain, a trauma, an awareness and guilt that we *endure* and *suffer* because, as proxies, we cannot but feel some of her pain, her terror, and her shame and ultimate abandonment. We cannot but have this *manifest* in our bodies, which have often also known personal experiences of familial trauma. This

burden is further painful because in bearing witness the women in my family come to reveal, in various degrees, that they tolerated or accepted and thus participated, in the perpetuation of familial violence.

In "Feminist Biography: The Pains, the Joys, the Dilemmas", Shulamit Reinharz asserts that "[d]enying people a history produces socially constructed ignorance, and is a form of oppression" (1994: 37). In the small, personal terms of my female family archive, this can be said to mean that my great grandfather's alteration of the family narrative that led to his daughter's banishment and ultimate erasure is a violent excision of a woman's life from history. Further, by partaking in this narrative banishment, my grandmother, aunts and mother are party to such forms of oppression. Yet according to Reinharz, "[w]riting biographies about women is thus inherently a form of protest" (1994: 37). This is a paradoxical situation, for although the tacit participation of the women in my family worked to produce our family narrative of exclusion and trauma, these women also come to Anne's aid through the testimonies that they are now delivering. Additionally important is that that there existed 'acts of protest' much earlier than these surrogates' testimonies. For example, at the time of Anne's final banishment from the family, while her father was still alive, her mother (my great grandmother), kept in contact with her, secretly, via my grandmother. Such gestures of clandestine contact also serve to remind us that *all* the women in this family, perhaps especially those of the generation closest to the patriarch and his doctrine, to some degree are severed from their own possible preferred lives, and the potential life possibilities to which female freedom might have given rise. In this context, their acts of surrogacy for Anne gather even greater poignancy.

Through various archival acts of surrogacy, the women in my family (in their own ways) created and continue to create a trace biography for Anne through the female archive. While their historical silences contributed to her oppression, through their fractured and scattered memories, connections, created meanings, metaphors and cadences their testimonies now offer a

curious protest, a point of expression for the unsayable trauma that has occurred within this family.

Unfamily/iar

in/anne/mate

Anne was my maternal grandfather's sister, the only girl among four brothers. I consider Anne the 'true witness' in Robert's terms, the witness who lived the experience from start to finish and thus becomes the complete but drowned witness because she lived through trauma, exile and died alone as a pauper (2006: 46). I have also located Anne within the closed archive of this family archive. The archive is, as I have discussed, "from its beginning a crypt, a place of ghosts and spectres amid ashes" (Robert, 2006: 47). In this place of family silence (withheld as a foundation against telling), Anne is indeed a spectre yet she is also made visible as a telling spectacle and we, through bearing witness, are not only her surrogates but also spectators of different fragments of her life as they blur concealing and revealing.

In dealing with Anne as closed archive I want to begin with her youth and what initially set her apart from the rest of the family: she suffered from epilepsy. I concentrate on the repercussions caused by epilepsy, especially in the psychosocial sphere that includes "stigmatization, stress, psychiatric morbidity [...] [and] poor self-esteem" (Benson et al., 2016:1473). Through her seizures Anne, prized only daughter in this family, suddenly became something unpredictable and therefore disturbingly different, separated from the rest of the family. In her teens Anne presented with grand mal seizures that caused loss of consciousness and violent muscle spasms. Epilepsy turned her into a perverse spectacle from which people averted their eyes and perhaps even their affections, prompted by fear, shame, disgust. Epilepsy remains an illness that carries a stigma. In the article "Epilepsy, stigma, and family" it is noted that the socio-economic status of the family has a significant influence on how epilepsy within the family is

perceived and managed (Tedrus, Pereira & Zoppi, 2018). Anne was from a struggling, white working class family of the 1930s, living in a small, conservative Karoo town in South Africa. The family already lacked social and economic status, as they were not farmers who owned land or upwardly-mobile middle class burghers who lived in the affluent part of town. To this was then added the stigma of Anne's epilepsy. Repercussions from epilepsy and its unpredictable nature (according to Tedrus, Pereira and Zoppi) have an impact both on the person with the disease, as well as the family's ability to socialise. When a family member suffers from epilepsy, the family is placed on the social periphery. Since epilepsy is still considered an important contemporary contributor to social stigma, I can only imagine what it was like for Anne.

Anne

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In medical scholarship, the parents' methods of coping with a child's epilepsy are also highlighted as a consequential influencer of how the illness will be conceptualised and addressed by the family, as well as by the child sufferer. Most often, parental attitudes serve as "'*stigma coaches*' relaying to the child that epilepsy is something that is shameful and thus should not be spoken about" (Benson et al., 2016: 1474). Such aspects of epilepsy's acute

shame in the family feature prominently in my discussion of the surrogate testimonies of Anne's life.

I look at Anne through vignettes of my aunts (my mother's older sisters), childhood memories, considering how her illness rendered her an embodiment of the uncanny within the family. The uncanny is the coinciding of opposites, a very strange and uncomfortable marriage of the familiar and the unfamiliar, the foreign and the known. Freud's notion of the uncanny is a complex and somewhat elusive concept, entailing a duality and a simultaneity, a two-foldedness that confounds comprehension and clear explication. Freud describes the uncanny as "that class of terrifying that leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (1919:1-2), and adds to this class "the effect of epileptic seizures [...] because these excite in the spectator the feeling that automatic, mechanical processes are at work, concealed beneath the ordinary appearance of animation" (1919: 5). Within her family, Anne became uncanny in various ways. For example, she was the beloved daughter/sister rendered dramatically strange and unknown (*unknowable*) when physically ravaged by her illness. Even when her epilepsy did not manifest as a seizure, her medical condition meant she had been marked as different, as having the frightening potential to become other than herself at any time. During a seizure, when the epilepsy made itself brutally apparent – 'a within' the body projecting alarmingly outside - she was especially reduced to otherness. She became what seemed an inanimate object that was at the same time grotesquely reanimated by the violent assault of the electrical epileptic impulses on her brain and her body.

My eldest aunt describes Anne as she remembers her from childhood:

> Vir haar onthou ek baie goed want ek was toe al kleinkind en sy was uh, uh, altyd snaaks want kyk sy het epilepsie gekry en daai tyd was die medikasies maar nog nie so goed nie. En dan weet ek dan het Ouma-hulle ons net skielik, ons kleintjies, uit by die voordeur en dan moet ons op die stoep wag, en dan het sy 'n aanval gekry. Hulle wou nie hê ons moet dit sien nie want toe was dit

> lelik, sy het geruk en skuim, maar met die jare het sy medikasie gehad en dan het dit minder geword.[26]
>
> (Personal interview, Dec, 2009)

Anne's epilepsy was something mysterious and terrifying yet at the same time alluring exactly because it was rendered a secret – her illness was the beginning of her 'being different'. The familiarity of Anne is rendered unfamiliar through her illness, the onset of the seizures being sudden and unpredictable. Tedrus et al specifically note that stigma around epilepsy is exacerbated because of the condition's unpredictable nature, and this arbitrariness contributes to the trauma caused by the onset of seizures, both for the person suffering from epilepsy as well as the extended family members who witness these seizures (2018: 265).

Consider the broader repercussions of Anne's illness, how it is treated by the family, specifically the parents and adults. With the onset of a seizure, the other children in the household, in this instance, my aunts, Anne's nieces, were swept out of the home with a swiftness mirroring the sudden onset of the epileptic fit. Both actions are as uncannily looped in relation as a knot. Through her fits, Anne becomes an unsettlement of the home. She does not fit, or belong, but yet she remains in the family, whether in the course of her (epileptic) fitting, or not. The children are stigmatised by proxy, unhoned, chased out of the familiar home – a space now turned unfamiliar through the irruptions of epileptic seizures – in order that the very visible unfamiliar within the family might be protected from becoming (further) known. The convolutions are rampantly disturbing. Uncanny.

Freud uses the German words *heimlich* and *unheimlich* in order to describe the grey area which is the uncanny: "*unheimlich* is obviously the opposite of *heimlich, heimisch,* meaning 'familiar,' 'native,' 'belonging to the home'"

[26] Translation: Her I remember well because at that time I was the only grandchild and she was uh, uh, always funny because she got epilepsy and those years the medication was not that good yet. And then I know Grandma just suddenly took us, the little ones, out the front door and then we have to wait on the stoep [or veranda], then she had an attack. They did not want us to see because back then it was ugly, and she jerked and foamed, but with the years the medication got better and it lessened.

whereas the word 'unheimlich' is translated as 'unhomely' (1919: 2). My aunt's memories reveal that the children themselves were torn from the familiar of the interior of the family home and put on the outside, the un/familial/iar – and in this action the experiences of familiar and unfamiliar are disturbed, perhaps even inverted. Thus one can argue that the children in the family, and not just Anne, are placed in an uncanny space through subsequent reactions to Anne's disease as well.

The house, thus, becomes uncanny. The house does not only shelter the children from the outside when they are within its walls and under its roof; it also comes to serve as protection from the unfamiliar inside the familiar of the home by keeping the children outside the disturbing ambit of manifestations of Anne's illness. In this sense the house shelters the threat and traumatic event, the unfamiliar as rendered in Anne's body by her illness, instead of the threatened/the children.

I refer again to Derrida, as I have done in my discussion of the possibility of a closed archive, when he writes about the archive that shelters itself from that which it shelters (1995: 43). Derrida goes further, explaining the concept of the archive through its origin in the word *arkē*, from the Greek *arkeion*. In its 'initial' meaning this refers to "a house, a domicile, an address" (1995: 9). Thus the family home as an archive itself also shelters exactly that from which it shelters. This anomaly illustrates how my family deals with the traumatic within the family by often protecting the very trauma and not the traumatised. Though this is done with the intention of protecting those within the family from being traumatised by one who is herself within the family and is already traumatised by her illness, it becomes a state where there is more protection for the stigmatising cause of the trauma than for the victim of such trauma. I thus point out, again, that my female family archive simultaneously becomes what we survive and how we survive. My female family archive always remains uncanny in itself.

Derrida argues that the archive's very origin lies within the concept of the house and domicile, and I propose that within such arguments a space for the female archive can be found. He writes that it is:

> [I]n this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret.
>
> (1995: 10)

Concerning Anne, and my aunt's bearing witness as a surrogate to Anne's epilepsy, the family home as archive *does* mark a passage from private to public, yet not (as one might then expect) from the secret to the nonsecret. The act of keeping Anne within the house, preventing and blocking others from entry, literally locking children outside and making them others (other than themselves), can be seen as an act of arresting Anne, with/holding what was considered the unseemly, disturbing spectacle of an epileptic episode. This is an uncanny series of holdings. In one sense, there is a benign holding of Anne indoors by her parents to protect and comfort her while the seizure passes. But in another, more malign sense, Anne is arrested within the space where she dwells – her very family home serves as a keep, a prison. In this instance the passage from private to public, as demonstrated through the children's placement outside the domicile, is in fact to secure the secret. The movements between familiar/unfamiliar, inside/outside and secret/nonsecret are manipulated and unsettled in order to keep the family intact and functioning despite disruptive and traumatic events (and despite the fact that the family is *already* ruptured by the wracking certainty of epilepsy that will, at uncertain times, show itself). Events that introduce and display otherness and the uncanny into the family threaten the established and comfortable modes of operating, within the family itself as well as the family within the broader society, which destabilises and contradicts the known norms, roles and rituals they operate in as a collective.

Moving, Speaking, Wearing

The Red Nails

Assman asserts that "[a]cts of forgetting are a necessary and constructive part of internal and social transformations; they are, however, violently destructive when directed at an alien culture or a persecuted minority" (2008: 98). Such ideas can be adapted to help me think about Anne as a marginalised or minority figure within our family. Forgetting was a patriarchal enforcement in our family, a necessary tool for the survival of designated constructs of the preferred family narrative. Forgetting becomes a clear illustration of the possible destruction and violence that can ensue when the erasure of memory is insisted upon. With her illness, Anne violently disrupted the family's already precarious cohesion – and the nature of the illness meant, through sudden seizures, that she was liable to disrupt again and again, predictably unpredictable. An obligatory collective participation in a form of collaborative amnesia by the family members ensued in order both to create and perpetuate Anne's narrative via forgetting. This family narrative rendered Anne 'alien' because of her illness. As I will subsequently discuss, however, Anne's continued status as a pariah *also* included reasons beyond epilepsy, being tied to events that preceded her illness. My discussion will indicate aspects of the broader societal context in which a female story develops, and how this is used to defend and legitimise Anne's banishment from her family, her home and the town. This has had consequences for the female family archive, for such acts of ultimate excision from the memoried record extended to forbidding other family members from having contact with her, talking about her, and even mentioning her name. This banishment became a consciously created narrative that the family members use to maintain the patriarchal rules of family behaviour, as determined by my great grandfather. But the collaboratively-justified denial of Anne and her story also served as a perverse, legitimised embodiment of the other defined as against the normative self, a tactic through which family members might soothe their collective and individual conscience.

In *Women's Realties. Women's Choices* it is remarked that culture attests to male control over its construction, this control being exerted "over language, religion and ritual, literature and the arts" (Bates et al., 1995: 35). When we look at the reasons for Anne's exclusion, we find that her ostracism is based on these areas of specifically male control, which in turn corroborate the broader power of Afrikaans speaking culture. According to the testimonies of the women in my family, Anne moved from her small hometown to 'the city'; she lived in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, and Springs, and when she came to visit her family she seemed changed to the family. Also, she now went by 'Annie' and not Anne and though she came from an Afrikaans household, her urban identity meant that she subsequently preferred to speak English. These aspects are especially notable because, more conventionally, the women in my family only moved away from their home town if they relocated with their husbands. Even then, they tended only to settle in other small rural towns, nearby. In another form of movement of subjectivity, the changing of their names or household language coincided with getting married, Anne thus being the exception. When she changed her given name, however slight, this still indicated a change of identity that did not coincide with marriage, but spoke to her own agency and desire.

I want to extend my focus on male control over the construction of culture and identity in my family. My great grandmother, for example, was Afrikaans and belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. When she married an English speaking man she and their children spoke English and joined the Anglican Church. Years later, when her alcoholic husband left her because he could not control his addiction and did not want to be a continued source of shame for his family, she spoke Afrikaans with the younger children, who were still living in the house, and went back to the Dutch Reformed Church. When my grandmother grew up and married an Afrikaans man, their household language was Afrikaans (not English) and they attended the Dutch Reformed Church, not the Anglican. These small details of women's affiliation, both constrained and elected, highlight Anne's unsettling status as an exception to female cultural norms. Anne was an

anomaly in ways other than the othering illness of epilepsy. Anne moved to the city as a single woman; she changed her name; she changed her language. All of these were changes made under her independent agency, rather than because of a man or marriage. It begins to become clear, then, that Anne was a discomforting member of the family; she flouted female norms and was thus susceptible to being stigmatised.

Bates et al describe gender as "something we *do*, rather than something we *are*," explaining "that each of us *does* gender through our dress, speech, behaviour and interactions with others" (1995:137). This is clear in Anne's life. The women in my family tell that after moving to the city Anne dressed beautifully, but in a style very different, more glamorous and more seductive, than that customary among the women in the family. This, along with the fact that she kept her finger nails long, painted red, and that she smoked, is a recurrent feature of Anne's story in all the family members' testimonies. These details and perceptions reveal how both society and the family, my family, held to preferred conventions of how a woman should act, appear and behave. Anne's actions and choices did not adhere to contextual norms. This said, the way Anne 'did' gender made a lasting impression on the other women in my family, especially my two aunts who were children at that stage.

Though my aunts were enamoured of Anne, impressed by her version of femaleness, they knew that Anne was not someone to be emulated. Bates et al discuss gender roles asserting that "we learn both 'female' and 'male' behaviour by observing others. However, the behaviour we *perform* is a function of whether it is rewarded ('you're a good girl') or punished ('nice girls don't do that')" (1995: 136). Though Anne revealed an alternative to what my aunts were taught a woman could be or do, and although they observed this with great interest and admiration, her behaviour was not something that was copied because Anne was punished for her transgression of norms, being regarded, euphemistically, as not a 'good girl'.

Breaking, Fragmenting

Red

My mother's eldest sister shared one of her childhood memories. She recalled witnessing passionate debates about politics between Anne and her brothers, to the extent that she remembers Anne, while making a point, bringing down her finger so hard on the table that one of her long red nails broke. Though my aunt observed this as a young child, unaware of what politics really involved, the intensity of the debate made an indelible impression on her. She still recalls clearly:

> Maar nou het my pa hulle so gespot want sy het altyd die lang naels gehad, sy het haar goed versorg, en sy kon vreeslik driftig raak oor 'n saak. Dan stry hulle broers nou, en sy is al dogter, met haar oor politiek en goed, dan kap sy met daai nael dat die nael breek, ons het ons verkyk aan haar.[27]
>
> (Personal interview, Dec, 2009)

These childhood memories are extremely powerful and complex and imply how a female archive is created. I return to Bennett's "The Aesthetic of Sense-memory: Theorising Trauma through the Visual Arts" to look at the extended version of a section I have already referred to:

> [W]ords can be put into the service of sense memory, vision has a very different relationship to affective experience, experience that - while it cannot be spoken as it is felt - may register visually. The eye can often function as a mute witness through which events register as eidetic memory images imprinted with sensation.
>
> (2003: 31)

[27]Translation: But my father scoffed because she always had the long nails, she was well groomed, and she could get very passionate about causes. Then she and her brothers would argue, and she is the only daughter, with her about politics and things, then she bangs with that nail on the table till the nail breaks, we gaped at her.

Without being expressly articulated in language, broad concepts of preferred female behaviour are conveyed and impressed upon my aunt at a very early age, through embodiment and lived experience. The breaking of Anne's nail in the argument, her red nails being a clear identifier of her socially provocative status vis a vis the more obedient, respectable women in the family, registers in my aunt as a sensory and visual presence. My aunt retains this memory, and feels something of its continuing power in the re-telling of the interview situation. This suggests to me that she was aware, even in childhood, that the family's interactions with Anne were significant, but she did not have the knowledge or maturity to know why. Thus, now, the memory registers in a sensory way where dramatic visual recollections, like the breaking of Anne's red nail, are prioritised. There is a violent undercurrent to what my aunt witnessed that surfaces when one reads the breaking of Anne's red nail as a 'memory image', a symbol and metaphor. My aunt's eyes serve here as 'mute witnesses' to the 'experience that was felt' and not necessarily processed as known.

Bennett explains that the "poetics of sense memory involve not so much *speaking of* but *speaking out of* a particular memory or experience – in other words, speaking from the body *sustaining sensation*" (2003: 33). My aunt speaks 'out of' the sensation of her visual experience yet she also speaks of Anne's body 'sustaining sensation'. Thus her sensory memory is the secondary experience of another's sensory experience. In effect, we might consider that a secondary experience of trauma that is unknown, that my aunt is unaware of, becomes symbolised through the breaking of Anne's red nail and is carried in her own body as a receptacle and surrogate for these events.

In this instance my aunt bears witness through the sensory rendering and imprints in her own body thus speaking of by speaking out of. Shirley Prendergast, in *The Body, Childhood and Society*, describes "the body 'as the very fabric of self' [...] [used] to expand our understanding of how social interpretations, material practices and bodily experience are essentially intertwined" (2000: 104). In both my aunts' testimonies, their 'childhood

bodies' become surrogates as well, their bodies become entities to be acted upon, to be marked. My aunt's childhood memory was experienced through her senses and carried as a memory of the body, so that the body rather than the mind becomes the surrogate. Yet in the process of recalling this memory as an adult, as she bears witness in the present, the memory becomes a memory of the memory of an experience.

Such states of layered re-doubling are inherent in acts of bearing witness where childhood memories are involved. This is because childhood memories are memories created and contrived in a very different way than the memories of an adult. Freud argues that:

> [C]hildhood memories owe their existence to a process of displacement. It may be shown in psychoanalysis that in the reproduction they represent the substitute for other really significant impressions, whose direct reproduction is hindered by some resistance. As they do not owe their existence to their own contents, but to an associative relation of their contents to another repressed thought [...].
>
> (2003: 32)

Considering the gap between the childhood memory retained and the memory revisited as an adult these women as surrogates are in such instances of bearing witness both proxies of Anne as well as proxies of their childhood selves. Yet, even more than this, the memories themselves, because they are the memories of a child, are already removed or displaced because they are innately, as Freud argues, substitutes for other events or understanding of events. There is an inherent element of repression in childhood memories because there is a gap between what is experienced and what can be grasped by the child's understanding at that stage. Thus there is always only a partial grasp of experiences that registers more strongly through sensory and bodily memory than through cognition. Bearing witness consists of many acts and states of replication as well as different acts of reduplication that often occur simultaneously. The surrogate can be

a proxy for another person, a proxy for the 'true witness', as well as a proxy for the own 'previous' self. In this instance my aunt bearing witness now becomes a surrogate for her childhood self who witnessed the 'true witness', *and,* as well, she is a surrogate for Anne as the original witness.

What I want to draw attention to is how, through these surrogates registering and carrying memories of the surrogate in their own bodies, their testimonies fragment the body of the true witness. In these childhood memories and embodied testimonies, Anne is splintered into certain aspects of self associated with a body in parts: nails, clothing, lips. The testimonies reveal a broader social context as well as the very small yet salient, deeply expressive impressions of a child. In these testimonies Anne is disaggregated by and in language. Much like Margaret Atwood writes in *Surfacing:* "I touched him on the arm with my hand. My hand touched his arm. Hand touched arm. Language divides us into fragments" (1972: 140).

Before discussing any further this fragmentation of Anne in these testimonies, I want to expand on the concept of fragmentation by looking at how language can be fragmented and objectified. In her book, *My Lovely Day*, referring to her short film with the same title, Penny Siopis explains how in her conversations with her grandmother she "treated her phrases… like 'found objects'" (2005: 94). In both my aunts' testimonies one can isolate words, sentences, descriptive impressions that can be viewed as found objects, and with/in these fragments of language Anne herself is represented in a disjointed fashion. My mother's middle sister talks about Anne:

> Ja, ons het altyd aan haar lippe gehang…sulke lang naels gehad wat sy bloedrooi geverf het en sulke fyn wit vingertjies, sy was baie mooi, en sy het so beduie met die hande en sy het gebrei gedurig…[28]
>
> (Personal interview, June, 2010.)

[28] Translation: Yes, we were in awe of her, hanging on her every word…had such long red nails that she painted blood red and such fine white tiny fingers, she was very pretty, and she would always gesture with her hands and she knitted incessantly.

Prendergast writes: “In the language of embodiment, in forms of embodied experience and value then we might expect to find the variety, complexity, processes of metaphor, paradox and symbolism that are the very stuff of cultural meaning” (2000: 104). As Anne is described and visualised through these specific childhood vignettes she is remembered via parts of her body, a representative synecdoche of small white hands, long, red nails, and hand gestures. These glimpses become characteristics that, in my opinion, offer more insight into this closed archive than the actual photographs I have of Anne.

In the accompanying artist’s book, I re-work the photographs of Anne, the only physical objects I have related to her, through various mediums. I do this in order to engage with the images on levels that bring me closer to the sensory embodiment of Anne as she exists in her surrogates’ testimonies. I employ elements of crude fragmentation in my collage-like reworking of the photographs. In the section ‘a, c, f, p, r, s, t, u’, I concentrate on detailed aspects of Anne’s face, both enlarging the images and cropping them severely (pp. 71-85). In these instances the images tend to become abstract, and awareness of the photograph as an object is created by showing the stains, folds and scratches the surfaces that have gathered through the years. On my own photographs I also leave dust, scratches, fibres as well as blemishes created by developing and scanning, blunders to highlight the physical process an image has gone through. A play on concepts of the animate and inanimate is also created by placing cropped images of Anne in relation to my own photographs of physical objects from our female family archive, specifically bone china, as seen in section ‘a, b, d, i, m, s’ (pp. 86-99). I use scale both in Anne’s photographs as well as my own to defamiliarise the subject matter, an estrangement intended to highlight more formal elements such as composition, form, line, and colour. Through these elements I establish a likeness and similarity between these various pairs of photographs that invites the viewer to make connections between person and object. (These relationships become extremely complex and are investigated in-depth in the third and fourth chapters of my dissertation.)

The symbols and metaphors that the testimonies and also my artist's book invoke in relation to Anne reveal clear cultural and familiar constructions and performances of gender roles within my family. For as is asserted in *Women's Realities, Women's Choices,* "[i]n organizing our experience, we make use of *symbols* to give meaning to our perceptions. A symbol such as a word, a color, or an object, is used arbitrarily to represent something else" (Bates et al,. 1995: 24). Such personal symbolism is clearly seen in my aunts' testimonies of childhood memories and experiences with Anne. Whenever Anne is mentioned there is a reference to her long, red nails, and my aunt describes them as 'blood-red'.

The colour red indeed becomes a symbol in the testimonies of Anne and I would like to excavate this colour for associative meaning. In "Development of the Red-Negative Association: Motivation-based behaviours" Sandrine Gill and Ludovic Le Bigot research the complex meanings and emotions children associate with and attach to colour, specifically red. It is argued that because colours "carry meaning, colors can influence behaviours and underlying cognition resulting in emotion-based associations" (2017: 110). From these understandings it is then asserted that "red can convey a specific message: it is negatively valenced, and associated with danger, threat, and failure" (2017: 110-111). Anne's red nails, as much as they attract my aunts in their childhood, serve as silent alarms that warn of danger, and caution against transgressive female behaviours. The red nails attest to a version of femaleness that a woman should not adopt, and the family's negative treatment of Anne signals what would happen to my aunts if they did not adhere to prescribed gender roles.

Her red nails convey a further warning in my eldest aunt's recollection of Anne's nail breaking on the table in her passionate political debates with her brothers that stemmed from the fact that her brothers were very conservative in their political affiliations and Anne had more progressive political convictions. This destruction of the nail can be read as a metaphor for how Anne herself would later be broken off from the family. The fracture of the nail serves both as a warning and an example of what happens when

a female member of our family partakes in behaviour that is not deemed appropriate for women, such as Anne's passionate debates about opinions that differed from those of the men in the family.

The exploration of childhood memories introduces the arenas of the subconscious as well as sensory and abstract memory that connects to a state of 'pre-language'. Thus we move within a strange retrospective space of a surrogate witness revisiting childhood memories; here the relationships between language, people and fragments or even objects become complex and interchangeable. In "An Interpretive Poetics of Languages of the Unsayable" the authors refer to the poetic interpretation of languages of the unsayable and assert that "[b]etween the said and the not-said, we can hear and trace languages of the unsayable. They lie in the realm of the timeless dream, which works by an associative logic and is often coded in metaphoric or figurative language" (Rogers et al., 1999: 83). If one views these childhood memories as the 'poetics of the languages of the unsayable' the importance of metaphors and symbols intensifies. In my opinion such a poetics, as figuratively expressed in the testimonies about Anne, is the most valuable contribution from these surrogate witnesses because these narratives speak of the life of a forgotten woman.

When talking about Anne, the first things my aunts mention is the fact that she was 'different', due to her illness, and the associated ostracism. These observations are closely followed by their recollection of the allure she held, and then by the other aspects that set her apart from women in the family and the town, like her long red nails:

> En wat ek so goed onthou van haar, Oupa het daar as jy inkom by sy tuin, hy het mos 'n groot tuin gehad, het hy so groot kersieboom gehad reg in die middel - sulke groot bloedrooi kersies. Nou sien ek nog hoe vat sy die kersie,

> wee jy ek sien dit so, met die lang rooi naels, die nael en die kersie is so dieselfde - dan druk sy hom so in haar mond - en dan haal sy die pitjie uit.[29]
>
> (Personal interview, June, 2010.)

Anne held magnetism, an aura of mystery – she was the foreign raised in the familiar. In my opinion it could be this unfamiliar sensuality that contributes to this deeply sensory memory my aunt has of this childhood experience in which she watches Anne in the garden put blood-red cherries into her mouth with her long red fingernails, and then remove the naked cherry stone, the red colours prompting her to intuit the intensely sensual connection between cherries, mouth, nails and the nature of Anne's dangerous femaleness. Gill and Le Bigot argue that colours can replace verbalization in children "to express complex or painful emotional states" (2017: 111). The colour red now becomes the shade of the cherry instead of blood; the danger of blood now becomes a sensual cherry-shade, the concept of danger now merges with sexuality. I argue that the colour red features in these memories as a metaphor to communicate the complexities my aunt encounters in this para-sexualised experience that she at that stage is not consciously able to process.

Everything in this experience is illicit, even dangerous to her, but unavoidably attractive and still yet part of the family/iar. The cherry as symbol can be read to reveal in a provocative fashion these themes of sexuality and danger that Anne embodied. In *Women's Realities, Women's Choices* it is argued that women who are perceived as sexual are seen as bad and impure, "the erotic sex object offers herself to be 'eaten' […] popularly called 'sugar,' 'honey,' 'peach.' She may be reduced to a bodily part'" (Bates et al,. 1995: 32).

[29] Translation: And what I remember so well about her, Grandpa had there where you come into the garden, he had a big garden, he had a big cherry tree right in the center – such big blood-red cherries. I still see how she takes the cherry, you know I still see it right in front of me, with the long, red nails, the nail and the cherry the same – then she pushes it into her mouth – and then she takes the stone out.

Anne is not only repeatedly reduced to certain body parts in these testimonies; she indeed becomes sexualised particularly in this recollection. And even though it is remembered so clearly by my aunt and in such great sensory detail these are attributes and actions that were never emulated – drawn as she might have been to them, powerful as they were, there was a simultaneous awareness that Anne embodied female improprieties. Yet this might not have been a conscious awareness at such a young age, this is why these metaphors and symbols are so powerful and why it is so important to read these testimonies as the poetry of the unsayable and unsaid.

By designating Anne as different, at once familiar yet unfamiliar within the set family narrative and the gender roles this entailed, she is marked as uncanny but also her supposed deviance is somewhat 'contained', for with Anne kept to the margins as outcast, the family need not suffer any overt upset, no changes in decorum and moral norms. Anne's red nails were rendered into ten scarlet letters – foreboding warnings of the 'bad woman' that girls should remember, lest they transgress and suffer the consequences. Located within the poetic realms of the unsayable, however, these symbols are redrawn and can now be read in other ways that reveal the complex threats and threads of the workings of violence and trauma for a woman within my family.

red flesh

inserted

fragile, white fingers

fruit - swallowed

seed – discharged

Striking

Stricken

Anne was rendered other through the repercussions of blatant familial trauma that started with a single violent event committed by one person, a violence that provoked the onset of her illness. Yet beyond this, Anne's trauma prompted a slow, continued eradication of family connection and personal erasure via the perpetuation of an altered narrative by her entire family. Anne was robbed of her body, her name and her knowledge of self – due to the impact of her seizures and the medicine she had to take to treat the illness. Finally, Anne was left to die alone – completely undone by those closest to her, the blood of her blood, blood of her blood-red nails.

Butler writes about what it is to be a physical being in this world: "consider the demands that are imposed upon us by living in a world of beings who are, by definition, physically dependant on one another, physically vulnerable to one another" (2004: 27). If one narrows the scope of living in a 'world of beings' to living in a 'family of beings', this state of physical vulnerability becomes more opaque and harder to detect. We are taught concepts such as 'stranger danger' but not 'family foe'. Familial trauma, in its various forms, is the blood of our blood that we carry on our hands. Yet in this instance it is the blood-red of Anne's nails that becomes a glaring symbol of the supposed threat which Anne presents to the family, while the figurative blood on the family members' hands remain unseen.

However, in my interview with my aunt, my mother's middle sister, the amount of blood on my family's hands become visible:

> E: Ek wil meer weet van Anne, wanneer sy haar eerste aanval gehad het?
>
> O***: Ouma het gesê sy was vyftien of sestien, sê maar sestien, en sy het die aand saam met 'n kêrel uit iewers heen gegaan - en toe hulle terugkom het hy haar voor op die stoepie gesoen - en toe maak Oupa F*** die deur oop en sien waar hulle staan en soen. Toe slaan hy [haar pa] haar met 'n belt of iets, voor

> die man… toe het sy haar eerste aanval. En dan sê hulle epilepsie het nie te doen met invloede van buite nie.[30]
>
> (Personal interview, June, 2009)

From this moment of violence Anne's body would never belong to herself again, "for violence is, always, an exploitation of that primary tie, that primary way in which we are, as bodies outside ourselves and for one another" (Butler, 2004: 27). We are vulnerable because we are, as Butler suggests, bodies 'given over' to one another, yet concerning Anne this vulnerability is exacerbated because it is in the perceived safety of the family that she is robbed of her control of her body. This occurs firstly through the violence of her father's physical attack upon her when he discovers her kissing a boy. Note that even in a cultural context where it was commonplace to hit a child as punishment for perceived transgression, this was no mere spanking. Anne's father gave her a violent beating. Secondly, Anne loses control over her own body when she at the moment of the beating experiences a seizure, the onset of what was to become her lifelong illness being triggered by her father's extreme act of violence, intended to compel her not to transgress further, but to behave according to preferred female social norms. The repercussions of trauma last a lifetime but in Anne's case the repercussions took on an extremely physical form that literally seized away the control over her own body – leaving her as vulnerable to the illness as to the familial violence. Her affliction carries a paradox at its core as it holds both the repercussions of trauma stemming from affiliative, family, bonds as well as the resulting repercussion of ostracism. Though the women in this female family archive perpetuate Anne's trauma so too is her trauma shared through their acts of bearing

[30] Translation: Me: I want to know more about Anne, when did she have her first seizure?
O*** (my aunt): Grandma (my grandmother) said she was fifteen or sixteen, say sixteen, and she was out with a boyfriend somewhere that night, and when they came back he kissed her on the stoop – and at that moment Grandpa F*** (Anne's father) opened the front door and see where they are standing and kissing. Then he hit her with a belt or something, in front of the man… she had her first attack then. And then they say epilepsy has nothing to do with influences from outside.

witness. I will continue by looking at the various blows of trauma, the physical and the psychological, that fall on more than just one body.

Ricoeur ponders: "[W]hat is it to remember? It is to have an image of the past. How is this possible? Because this image is an impression left by events, an impression that remains in the mind" (1984: 10). Memories as images are capable of leaving severe impressions. Bennett argues that "[y]ou need to feel to see images", and she goes further by referring to the physical act of 'squirming' – contending that the reaction of squirming, triggered by what one sees [or might I add remember as image] is "a moment of seeing feeling" (2003: 36-37). The witness as spectator produces a memory, an image in the mind, via the act of 'seeing feeling'. When serving as a witness to another's trauma one is inflicted with more than visual imprints – by 'feeling seeing' we can thus in a sensory way experience, to some extent, the trauma we observe in the surrogate capacity as witness. Here, it is apt to compare the act of the 'imprint' to the act of 'inscription'. I find it essential once again to return to Derrida. He argues that trauma:

> leaves a trace of the incision *right on* the skin: more than one skin, at more than one age [...] these cutaneous marks seems to defy analysis. It accumulates so many sedimented archives, some of which are written right on the epidermis of the body proper, others on the substrate of an 'exterior' body. Each layer here seems to gape slightly, as the lips of a wound, permitting glimpses of the abyssal possibility of another depth destined for archaeological excavation.
>
> (1995: 19)

These words enable me to locate the imprint, inscription, incision right on the skin of 'the body proper' – Anne's body. Anne bore the marks of familial trauma on her (improper) body; these marks are both physical on the very skin, the exterior, as well as on the psyche and interior. Yet these marks are also imprinted on some external body, for by 'feeling the seeing' the impression or inscription also registers on the body of spectator and witness

– in this case my aunts as children. These traumatic events do not leave traces on merely skin, on merely one skin or merely one moment of time: Anne's skin is imprinted by the initial act but so is her psyche – there is also an aspect of re-impression every time she has a seizure which renders a repeated physical mark making. The seizures also cause repeated scarring on her brain that created a slow deterioration of normal brain function over the years. Impressions are also made on more than just one body, as the consequences are imprinted onto the psyches of my aunts who witnessed the seizures. When my aunts relive these experiences in these moments of testimony fifty, sixty years after these imprints were rendered, these events and the impression they left also occur at more than one time. And subsequently, through the female archive we create, I am inscribed with this imprint of trauma three generations later.

When dealing with the photographs of Anne in the artist's book that accompanies the research project, I employ methods of collage in order to locate and dislocate, deliberately placing, replacing and displacing (parts of) images, so as to animate and/or to render static. With these interventions I draw attention to, and challenge, concepts of presence and absence to suggest the undercurrent of familial traumatic narrative that lies behind these photographs. My rough methods are used to create in the viewer an awareness of a violent intervention associated with these objects (pp. 74-85).

Unnaming

"Black Holes"[31]

My mother writes about Anne as: "die dogter wat Johannesburg toe is en 'n sleg lewe gelei het, soveel so dat hy [Anne se pa] haar die huis belet het en

[31](Nielsen 1999: 51).

belet het dat Ouma [Anne se ma] met haar kontak mag maak" (Personal journal, 2007). [32]

Anne is profoundly stigmatised. She is designated bad and banned from the family home by her father, who embodies patriarchal authority. He dictates his daughter's punishment which she must endure as his subordinate. Even beyond the initial severe beating on account of the transgressive teenage kiss, or possibly more than just a kiss, (both actions notably occur at the limen or threshold of the home, a boundary between private and public space), Anne is thereafter continually stricken by and in the family. She remains stricken. The father's physical strikes with the belt precipitate her seizure, and throughout her life she subsequently suffers the unpredictable blows of her epilepsy. Further, her being marked as a pariah culminates in her father eventually striking her from family relations and from the official, patriarchal family record as well. In effect, we have a situation in which the abject victim is punished many times over, struck and struck, while the father not only gets away with his abuse of power, but remains in his position of striking power as patriarch because he is considered not to be a perpetrator.

Anne was struck from the family narrative to the extent that her name was not allowed to be said. Pierre Bourdieu asserts that "[t]he proper name is the visible affirmation of the identity of its bearer across time and social space. (2000:300). He also describes the proper name as a "fixed point in a turning world" (2000: 299). His arguments convey the extent of the excision that occurs when someone is severed from the relational workings attached to her (or his) given name. Anne's name is eradicated from the family history, a narrative that should serve as a site in which a family member is able to moor the self, an 'anchor against space and time'.

In order for such quashing to be effective it must be practised by the collective, in this case the family. According to Nikolas Rose in "Identity,

[32] Translation: the daughter who went to Johannesburg and led a bad life, to the extent that he [Anne's father] banned her from the house and forbade Grandmother [Anne's mother] from making contact with her.

Genealogy, History" the "[h]uman being is emplaced, enacted through a regime of devices, gazes, techniques which expand beyond the limits of the flesh [...] Memory of one's biography is not simple psychological capacity, but is organized through rituals of storytelling" (2000: 321). In order to sustain the family and the survival of the self within the family and its narrative, one takes part in rituals which seek to secure compliance with the preferred conventions and supposedly established truths of family narrative. In my family this entailed looking away from familial trauma.

Accordingly, I would like to explore some of the ways in which the women in this family perpetuate the familiar family denial of Anne through various "regimes and devices". I aim to do so by looking at what Bjerrum Nielsen calls "Black Holes" as the 'unconscious structure of the text' and sites for self-construction; she suggests that attention be paid to areas where the text is too coherent, contradictory, ambiguous, untrustworthy, touching and so on:

> [t]hese instances may be related to content but are more often issues of form – selection, ordering, rhetorical figures, textual images. It is by virtue of our capacities as humans and our knowledge of particular culture that we are able to sense these irritations. Whether the conflictual themes are general or specific to a certain culture or family, they are marked by repression [...].
>
> (1999: 51)

Within the testimonies of the women in my family we are entangled in the workings of the unconscious structures that inform the familial narrative. More than one of the witnesses, when asked about Anne, recalled the lack of a recollection, and in many of these cases such absences of memory could imply suppression. Besides an ostensible total lack of recollection, in some cases there occurred a 'resurfacing' of memories, but only after I spoke about Anne. Such resurfacings of memory are evidently triggered by my inquiries into subject matters that were not often talked about in the family, Anne prominent among them. Because I am both writer and member of this

family, I am well equipped to enter these complicated sites, bringing to bear upon them my personal knowledge of family history, and the broader cultural context in which these family relations were situated. In some cases, when confronted with the testimonies of others – conflicting evidence, if you will – these women came to realise their complicity in Anne's repudiation and they were stunned by the sudden awareness of the repercussions, and the horror of the brutal situation. Such realisations carry awareness of guilt and can become confessional testimonies.

While talking about Anne I ask my mother's eldest sister at what stage Anne was not allowed to come home any more. She responds:

> Tannie P**: Nee ek weet nie nou nie, by die huis?
>
> Ek: Rerig nie? Dat sy nie meer huis toe mag gekom het nie?
>
> P: Nee ek weet nie.
>
> E: Dat Oupa [Anne se pa] haar soos verban het?
>
> P: Ek weet niks daarvan nie…
>
> E: Dis hoekom sy alleen gesterf het ook, kyk Ouma [my ouma]… Weet Tannie P** ook nie van die geheime pakkies nie?
>
> P: Huh uh.
>
> E: Omdat sy so baie mans gehad het, klink my sy was 'n paar keer getroud, en nie getroud nie, en Ouma sê sy het gedrink ook…
>
> P: Is dit?
>
> E: …en toe het julle Oupa haar belet om huis toe te kom en niemand van hulle mag meer met haar kontak gehad het nie.[33]

[33] Translation: Aunt P**: No I don't know now, at home?
Me: Really? That she wasn't allowed to come home anymore?
P**: No I don't know.

(Personal interview, Dec, 2009)

I ask my aunt more than once, while giving her more and more information, and she repeatedly denies that she had any knowledge of the family's treatment of Anne. In fact she is surprised, and reacts to what I am telling her as someone who truthfully was ignorant of the matter. She explains:

> Tannie P**: Ek het net gedog sy het maar nie meer gekom nie want sy het nog altyd geskryf… ek sien nog die handskrif, haar briewe…
>
> Ek: Maar Ouma, my ouma, julle ma, het in die geheim nog vir haar pakkies gestuur en toe later is sy na die inrigting toe. En ek weet my ma was nog 'n klein dogtertjie, en toe het hulle een keer daar gaan kuier… ek dink dit was in Pretoria… en sy onthou dit want dit was ontstellend… en ek dink sy [Anne] het nagklere aangehad en lang grys hare.
>
> P: Ja ek het haar nooit gesien toe sy daar was nie.[34]

(Personal interview, Dec, 2009)

I am quite flabbergasted by her reaction. Then, after her touching memory of Anne's handwriting I almost bombard her with the facts I have gleaned from my mother's journal – and she suddenly admits that she knew Anne was in an institution.

Me: that Grandpa [Anne's father] banished her?
P: I know nothing about that...
Me: that is why she also died alone, Grandma [my grandmother]… does Aunt P** also not know about the secret packages?
P**: Huh-uh.
Me: Because she had a lot of men, sounds like she was married a few times, and not married, and Grandma [my grandmother] said she also drank…
P**: really?
Me: … and then your grandfather forbade her from coming home and no one was allowed to have contact with her.

[34] Translation: Aunt P**: I still thought she didn't come anymore because she always wrote… I still see the handwriting, her letters.
Me: But Grandma, my grandmother, your mother, still send her packages in secret and later she went to the institutions. And I know my mother was still a little girl, and then they went to visit there one time… and I think she [Anne] was wearing pyjamas and had long grey hair.
P**: Yes I never saw her when she was there.

E: …en toe het O*** [my ma se ander suster] nog met dit aangegaan, en kyk sy is eers 'n klompie jare terug dood.

P: Ja kyk O*** het kontak gehou, want oom F*** [Anne se jongste broer] wou nie vir haar gaan groet het nie.

E: Ja aan die einde wou sy haar familie sien en O*** het vir hom geskryf en gevra.

P: …en hy wou nie gaan nie, snaaks want hy is self 'n liefdevolle mens maar ek dink hulle het haar afgeskryf.[35]

(Personal interview, Dec, 2009)

Now my aunt speaks confidently, revealing that she knew that her sister [my aunt] still kept in contact with Anne after my grandmother's death. She even knows that my aunt asked Anne's only surviving brother to go to her funeral because he was the family member who lived closest to the institution where she died. Yet he refused. And she states that she thinks that they all 'wrote her off', or shall we say, wrote her out. This reveals to me her intuition of the stigmatising she took part in, yet she never reflects an explicit awareness of responsibility or regret.

E: Was sy nou so sleg of was sy nou maar net bietjie vooruit vir haar tyd?

P: Wie jy, jy weet hoe is 'n kind, die bietjie wat ek van haar ken, sy was vir my net goed, en sy het altyd mooi gelyk en sy was interessant want sy kom van die stad af, en so aan. En die P*** met wie sy getrou het, haar eerste man gewees, was 'n baie oulike man.

[35] Me: … and then O*** [my mother's other sister] still continued with it, and she only died a couple of years ago.
Aunt P**: yes see still kept in contact because uncle F [Anne's youngest brother] didn't want to go and say goodbye to her.
M: yes at the end she wanted to see her family and O*** wrote to him and asked him.
P**: … and he didn't want to go, strange because he was a loving person himself but I think they wrote her off.

E: Onthou Tannie P** vir julle Oupa as humeurig of nie?

P: Hy kon seker wees maar hy was nooit met ons nie.[36]

(Personal interview, Dec, 2009)

She retreats back into her childhood memories, almost using them as a displaced site for her denial. I finally ask her if she knows why and when Anne had her first seizure:

E: Weet Tannie P** hoe Anne haar eerste aanval gehad het?

P: Nee wat, ons het maar gehoor sy kry aanvalle.

E: O*** [my ma se ander suster] het vertel sy was sestien toe het sy eers die eerste keer, en sy het blykbaar op die stoep by jul Oupa-hulle se huis gestaan en 'n kêrel was by haar en of sy hom gesoen het en of hulle wat gemaak het, toe het Oupa verwoed geraak en toe het hy haar geslaan.

P: My oupa nou? Oo.

E: Ja en toe het sy die eerste aanval gekry…

P: Haai

[onderhoud is kortstondig onderbreuk deur ander gebeure]

P: Nee ek weet niks daarvan nie.[37]

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[36] Translation: Me: Was she bad or was she just a little ahead of her time?
Aunt P**: you know, you know how a child is, the little I know of her, she was only good to me, and she always looked pretty and she was interesting because she came from the city, and so on. And the P*** she married, her first husband, was a very clever man.
M: Does aunt P** remember your grandpa as a man with a temper?
P**: I am sure he could be but he was never with us.

[37] Translation: Me: Does aunt P** know how Anne had her first seizure?
Aunt P**: No, we just heard she had fits.
M: O*** [my mother's other sister] told me she was sixteen when she had it the first time, and apparently she was standing on the stoop of your grandfather's house and a boyfriend was with her and whether they were kissing or what they were doing, Grandpa got furious and then he hit her.
P**: My grandfather? Oo.

(Personal interview, Dec, 2009)

She contends that she knows nothing about the violence that brought on Anne's first seizure; she is surprised and shocked by this information yet it does not seem to make any impact on her concept of her family narrative. She commits to what she experienced and knew yet what I am telling her does not seem to find a place of resonance. She instead holds onto her concept of this family's preferred narrative. I speculate that this is due to the fact that my testimony, of other's testimonies, threatens her concept of family and self within the family. My aunt adheres to the narrative codes she was brought up with; codes that inform what should and should not be talked about. These parameters not only create the 'black holes' where the identity of Anne, as well as my aunt's sense of self, were constructed, they are simultaneously sites of the destruction of the other. These locales arrange the self according to the set structures within the family and at the same time these structures derange that which does not adhere to the agreed norms, thus creating an other, in this case Anne as other.

Linda Wagner-Martin asserts in *Telling Women's Lives, The New Biography* that "somehow to name the trauma in women's lives is controversial" (1994: 13). For women to name trauma is to talk about things that are designated as taboo, such aspects of their lives are seen as private and thus silenced. To name trauma also involves upsetting the family as a functioning and patriarchal unit. The trauma in Anne's life that extended, via the intricate connections of family, into the lives of the other women in my family, is extremely divisive and this fear of the controversy and the repercussions of naming such things are still too great for my aunt to accept. As a member of this family, I can attest to the inherent threat of naming trauma; to give such information a name and a place disintegrates our well-trodden, established narratives of relation. The disillusioning that this process would entail is painful and the repercussions far reaching, to the extent that a

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M: yes and then she had her first seizure.
[interview is briefly interrupted by other events]
P**: No I know nothing about that.

person must dramatically adjust, even abandon, her received beliefs about the loved ones who played a formative role in her life. It is difficult to reconcile the established, habituated view with the provocative angles and perceptions being proposed by my interview with her. This leads not only to the questioning and re-examining of your concept of family, and yourself and self within it, but the questioning of love itself. Personally it has brought me to question what it is to love within a family.

In "An Interpretive Poetics of Languages of the Unsayable and Unsaid" the unsaid is also described as 'what is not named' (Rogers et al., 1999: 79). Extending this statement to include those who are not named, I suggest that Anne, in being robbed within the family of the relational currency of her name – family members literally not being allowed to utter her name – becomes a vivid embodiment of the unsaid. In order to locate Anne, and the traumas of her life, as she exists within the unsayable and unsaid, it is necessary to pay attention to what are described as languages of negation, silence, and evasion (Rogers et al., 1999: 89). These can be observed in an interview with my grandmother:

> Ek: Kan Ouma onthou dat Ouma en Mamma een keer vir Anne gaan kuier het in die gestig waar sy was, toe Mamma nog 'n klein dogtertjie was?
>
> Ouma: [In 'n stil stem, fluister] - dit kan ek regtig nie onthou nie Sussie.
>
> E: Mamma het my daarvan vertel…
>
> O: Dit kan ek regtig nie onthou nie, want sy was in verskillendes…
>
> E: Ek dink dis toe julle in Pretoria of iets was…
>
> [sy sê niks en praat weer oor die vliëe wat haar irriteer].[38]

[38] Translation: Me: Can Grandma remember that Grandma and Mom went to visit Anne one time at the institution where she was, when Mom was still a little girl?
Grandma: [in a quiet voice, whisper] – that I really can't remember Sussie (my nick name that translates as 'little sister'].
M: Mom told me about it…
G: I really can't remember that, because she was in different one's…

(Personal interview, Jan, 2009)

My grandmother not so much refutes that she went to visit Anne in the institution, as claims she cannot remember. In her negation her voice lowers to a whisper, imparting a secretive atmosphere (that also carries a hint of shame). When I give her more information and point to the fact that my mother attested to such a visit, her whisper becomes complete silence. And then she evades the question by talking about the flies that are bothering her. I was left with the impression that I might have been bothering her more at this moment than the flies.

Reciprocating

The Haunted

My connection with Anne started before I began my research into my female family archive. I am a secondary surrogate to Anne due to the fact that I never had a physical interaction with her, however, I have had a physical reaction that connected me to her and compelled me to discover her story and remember her name.

In "I See Dead People': Archive, Crypt and an Argument for the Researcher's Sixth Sense", Elizabeth Birmingham writes: "sometimes, when we are very lucky, we see dead people – people whose will won't be ignored – the relationship becomes reciprocal" (2008: 140). At the age of twenty four I had a serious grand mal seizure. When I was asked by doctors if there was a history of epilepsy in my family my mother told me about Anne and the illness that had plagued her. And thus it was then that Anne became an important figure in my medical history and my family narrative. After many tests and a year of observation, doctors concluded that my seizure was most likely induced by stress. It was only years later, in the process of my

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M: I think it was when you were in Pretoria or something…
[She says nothing and talks about the flies that bother her again].

research, that I learned that Anne's underlying illness was also triggered by the stress of a traumatic event.

This seizure event, experienced through my body, connected me to Anne before I started my research. My own experience of seizure was one I came to process as sharing with Anne, the stress-induced fits having skipped a generation and imprinted on me. It is thus not surprising that I sought out Anne in her closed archive within my female family archive. I sometimes feel that it was Anne who sought me out, a haunting absence hoping to find animated expression after years of family denial. Whatever the impulse, I have experienced through her narrative a reciprocal relationship. Birmingham's words are trenchant here:

> It has taken me more than fifteen years to understand the promise that has grown from my friendship with a woman who died before I was born. That promise, which has become my responsibility as a researcher, has led to my interest not in teasing apart some truth of her life, not in seeing it as a life that needs me to ride in like the cavalry to recover its importance, but to ask why it is a life that should need recovering at all.
>
> (2008: 144)

It has taken me eleven years since my first encounter with Anne to understand my intricate relationship with her. The 'promise' to which Birmingham refers rested on me not merely as researcher but as a woman of the same family working within this family archive. I found myself called as a subsequent surrogate and witness to Anne. And though I am urged by passion, in the absurd hope that I might lessen her pain and neglect, I have come to realise that it is most important to draw attention to her life and argue why such lives deserve attention, and that even in this process, I can only aim to find some semblance of expression for Anne.

Sounding

Pink

For a brief period of time while she was in her fifties, my mother wrote about her childhood. She wrote with pencil in a plain black A5 notebook with red binding. She did not write her memories in some official journal or special diary; instead she chose the type of book one uses at school. Inside she rendered her memories in the impermanence of a soft pencil that moved easily over the page, not leaving deep indentations on its surface.

Physically the journal seems insignificant; mundane and perishable. It seems inconsequential, much like the lives of the women in this archive I am gathering and mediating. My mother's personal journal as object speaks of this female archive both through the words it holds as well as through how its existence as material object is perceived.

Simple as the journal may appear it can reveal, much like the unexceptional lives of these women, the complicated interactions with, and adaptations of, silences within the operations of the family. In the notebook, my mother writes about her paternal grandfather (Anne's father). Once again we deal with childhood memories, experiences and impressions, yet within the journal my mother does not merely revisit these memories she retrospectively partakes in them as an adult, and this gives a particular quality to her testimony. The testimony starts with the retelling of a childhood experience with her grandfather. The memory consists of sitting in silence and the mimicking of actions. The child experienced her grandfather's silence in these events, and embedded it in her memory and now the grown woman, as she bears testimony, fills these silences retrospectively with the knowledge she did not have as a child. She describes the layout of her grandparents' house, and her grandfather's garden:

> Teen die sy-muur was 'n mooi ou hout tuinbank. Daar het Oupa altyd middae gesit in die koelte. Ek het dan baie kere, terwyl ma en ouma in die kombuis

> gesels, buite langs hom op die bank gesit. Ek dink nie ons het ooit veel gepraat nie. Hy het of met sy twee hande op sy ou magie gerus en sy duime oor mekaar gerol, eers vorentoe 'n paar keer en dan weer agtertoe. Weet nie of hy telling gehou het van hoeveel keer in elke rigting nie. Of hy het met sy kierie in die grond voor hom geteken. Hierdie twee dinge het my gefassineer en het ek elke keer altwee agterna gedoen. Laasgenoemde het ek met my eie klein hout kierietjie gedoen. Dit was my ouma grootjie s'n.[39]
>
> (Personal journal, 2007)

My mother recalls how she copied her grandfather's bodily movements when sitting with him in silence, at this stage unaware of all the events surrounding Anne. This was a performative mimicry she would not have been able to conceptualise as a processing of a bond beyond words. Bourdieu speaks of a practical state that is without discourse:

> The child imitates not "models" other people's actions. Body *hexes* speak directly to the motor function, in the form of a pattern of posture that is both individual and systematic, because linked to a whole system of techniques involving the body and tools, and charged with a host of social meanings and values: in all societies, children are particularly attentive to the gestures and postures which, in their eyes, express everything that goes to make an accomplished adult.
>
> (1977: 87)

Through Bourdieu's ideas, I can discern how my mother is intrigued by the adult's actions and mannerisms and thus proceeds to copy a person she sees as an accomplished adult. He is, of course, – the sombre elderly

[39] Translation: Against the side-wall there was a beautiful old wooden bench. There Grandpa always sat in the afternoon in the shade. I think we never talked much. He either sat with his two hands on his stomach rolling his thumbs over each other, first forward a few times and then backwards. Don't know if he kept count of how many times in each direction. Or he drew with his cane in front of him in the dirt. These two things fascinated me and I copied them every time, the latter with my own little cane that belonged to my great-grandmother.

patriarch of the family, deemed worthy of respect and admiration. I compare this to my aunts' experiences with Anne. Though they as children also found her fascinating, as my mother did her grandfather, they never imitated her. Instead, they were aware, even at a young age, that she was not viewed as an 'accomplished adult' whose female behaviour was worthy of emulation.

A few lines further, however, my mother writes, in this instance from her perspective as adult, with the knowledge about Anne she has gathered since the memory she recalls:

> Ek het nou dat ek 'n groot-mens is al so baie gewonder wat Oupa al die tye wat hy daar buite gesit het aan gedink het.[40]
>
> (Personal journal, 2007)

My mother continues to fill her grandfather's silences with all the possible things she now suspects he might have been thinking about. She names the war he was in. She names the war his sons fought in. And then she names Anne. In this case my mother effects in her own writing and reflection something of what I, in my role as researcher, am attempting. This is explicable with reference to "An Interpretive Poetics of Languages of the Unsayable" as a process where "what is unspoken becomes an opening and a resource for exploring the layers of another person's experiences and understandings" (Rogers et al., 1999; 81). My mother, reflecting as an adult, tentatively explores the silences and absences in her family narrative and locates in these the traumas of the family. I have come to argue in my work that the archive, serving as the lacuna of the family narrative, is a location for familial trauma, and it becomes apparent that my mother, though unconsciously, located such trauma in the same place. Through her writing she not only offers a location for the trauma but begins to establish the trauma in this archive by continuing to write about it – thus making it accessible to others. Initially, my mother's writing of a journal is an act within the private and interior female archive. Yet by making the journal

[40] Translation: Now that I am an adult I have often wondered what my grandfather thought of all the times he sat there.

accessible to me and my doctoral study my mother's own writing becomes a passage from the private/interior to the public/exterior – her journaling practice thus becomes a transference similar to my own writing – her own attempt at intimating the female family archive. Such acts are a clear contribution to the creation of the female archive through the surrogate acts of bearing testimony.

As my mother functions as witness and proxy to these events, complicated workings of surrogacy occur. Recall Bennett's writing on sense-memory, where "the eye can often function as a mute witness through which events register as eidetic memory images imprinted with sensation" (2003: 31). In a form of synesthetic transference, my mother's eyes operate as voiceless spectators to her grandfather's silences that were so powerful to her, even as a child, that she remembers them to this day. These silences, a heavy stillness, have an ominous and haunting quality that is a characteristic of how the unsayable and the unspeakable operate. This is a complex relation; "[w]hat is unsayable lies just under the surface of conscious knowing, whereas what is unspeakable exists as a deep and haunting sense of something present that begs for words" (Rogers et al., 1999: 86).

These remembered silences, the unsaid, remain under the surface of her consciousness, especially in this instance because she was a young child at the time of these experiences. But with the knowledge that came with age the unsaid haunted her like an 'unspeakable' that 'begged for words'. By offering words to the haunting she now, in turn, retrospectively imprints onto herself as child, much like these experiences with her grandfather imprinted on the child then. Her childhood self thus becomes a medium through which these complicated connections can be made and this archive can be created.

In her journal my mother continues;

> Ek het Anne, die enigste dogter [van my oupa], nooit ontmoet nie… Ek het haar wel jare later ontmoet. Ek was seker so std.3 of 4. Sy was in 'n inrigting… Sy was 'n epilepsie [sic] lyer en in daai jare was die medikasie nie so effektief

> nie, en ek glo sy het ook lank daarsonder gewees. Dus het dit met die jare haar brein aangetas en was sy nie meer heeltemal normaal nie. My ma is die een wat my pa oorreed het om te gaan… Ek was op my senuwees. Al wat ek van hierdie vrou geweet het was die pakkies en briewe wat geheimsinnig na haar toe gestuur is. Dit het natuurlik altyd vir my hierdie opwindende misterie ingehou… Daar was deure met glaspanele in. Geriffelde glas. Daardeur het ons geloop tot in 'n tipe ontvangs lokaal met stoele. Kaal, koud en aaklig. Toe het hulle haar gaan haal. Tot in die uur kan ek nie onthou hoe haar gesig gelyk het nie. Sy was skraal en het 'n ou vaal pienk kamerjas aangehad. Baie armoedig. Sy was vreeslik opgewen en verward. Het glad nie geweet wie my pa was nie. Toe hy vir haar sê en verduidelik het sy mal geword. Sy was buite haarself en buite beheer. Sy het hom vasgegryp en vreeslik tekere gegaan. Verder kon ek niks onthou nie. Dit was vir my 'n verskriklike ondervinding. Wonder of my ma my dalk uitgevat het, die dat ek niks onthou nie. Of het ek dalk verkies om niks verder te onthou nie?[41]
>
> (Personal journal, 2007)

My mother recounts this visit in my interview with her as well:

> Ek: Het Oupa [my ma se pa] nie saam ingegaan nie?

[41] Translation: I never met Anne, the only daughter [of my mother's grandfather]… I did however years later. I was probably around std.3 or 4[in grade5 or 6 at school]. She was an epilepsy sufferer and in those days the medication wasn't that effective. I also believe she was without it for long periods of time. Thus it affected her brain through the years and she wasn't totally normal at this stage. My mother was the one that convinced my father to go… the only thing I knew about this woman were the parcels and letters that were clandestinely sent to her. Naturally this always held an exciting mystery for me… There were doors with glass panels [in the institution]. Corrugated glass. Through that we walked into a type of reception area with chairs. Bare, cold and horrible. Then they went to fetch her. Even now I can't remember what her face looked like. She was slender and was wearing a pale pink nightgown. Very poverty-stricken. She was extremely wound-up and confused. She did not know who my father was at all. When he told her and explained she went crazy. She was outside of herself and out of control. She gripped him and went horribly berserk. Further I can't remember anything. It was a horrible experience for me. Wonder if my mother possibly took me outside that's why I don't remember anything? Or maybe I choose not to remember anything else?

My Ma: Ja… [Sy raak bewoë en haar stem klink amper soos 'n kind s'n] toe sy vir hom gesien het het sy so aangegaan, heel beserk geraak, sy was bly, in ekstase - die jare wat sy niemand gesien het nie en hier staan hy voor haar.

E: Wat het hy gedoen?

M: Ek weet nie, dit was vir my verskriklike ontsettende baie goed wat ek moes inneem… En die ou plek self, dis in my brein ingegraveer, dit was terrible.

E: Het julle na die tyd daaroor gepraat?

M: My ma-hulle het seker maar hulle het nie met my daaroor gepraat nie, dit was vir my 'n baie erge ding. Het my ma met jou oor dit gepraat?

E: Sy het gesê sy kan nie onthou nie.

M: As ek dit kan onthou dan moet sy dit kan onthou, sy was 'n groot vrou.[42]

(Personal interview, March, 2010)

Julia Kristeva speaks of the "fates of women in western culture: that of the classic hysteric who is denied her place in language, yet represents in that negativity a sort of disturbance of the symbolic order, of power and domination, *and* that of the mimic who takes her place in language and represents in that positivity a submission to the symbolic order, to masculine power and authority" (Jones, 1991:10). In the testimonies about

[42] Me: Did Grandpa [my mother's father] not go in with you?
My mother: Yes… [she becomes emotional and her voice almost sounds like a child's], when she made such a racket, became totally berserk, she was happy, ecstatic – the years she never saw anyone and here he stands in front of her.
M: What did he do?
Mm: I don't know, it was a terrible amount of things for me to take in…. and the old place, it's etched into my memory, it was terrible…
M: Did you talk about it afterward?
Mm: My parents probably did but they didn't talk to me about it, it was a very severe thing for me. Did my mother talk to you about it?
M: She said she can't remember it.
Mm: If I can remember she must remember it, she was an adult.

Anne it becomes clear that she suffered these two fates as well; because she was designated the hysteric she is denied her place in the family narrative.

Since the start of my investigation of the act of bearing witness I have been confronted by the intractable limits of the acts oral and intangible nature as it exist within language. And in this instance these limitations hamper me once again as Anne only exists in the testimony of these surrogates. She has no life independent of their vested accounts, and thus she remains smothered within language. In order to find some form of freedom from the constraints that language holds for testimony, I refer to Krog's description of Nomonde Calata's wail during her testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation hearings:[43]

> For me this crying is the beginning of the Truth Commission – the signature tune, the definitive moment, the ultimate sound of what the process is about. She was wearing this vivid orange-red dress, and she threw herself backwards and that sound … that sound …. it will *haunt* me forever and ever […] to witness that cry was to witness the destruction of language.
>
> (1998:42)

I am not trying to *equate* the political importance or even the emotional content of Anne's and Calata's narratives. But I reference Krog's description of Nomonde Calata's cry because it manages effectively to communicate, breaking through Krog's testimony in language, a moment of expression by the true witness removed from language. It is this ambiguous space of speaking in, through and then *beyond* language I claim for Anne, believing that it is possible to extract a similar instance of expressive articulation for Anne as the true witness from my mother's testimony.

As in Krog's writing, my mother's testimony contains a description of clothing that includes a reference to color - a pale pink night gown, old and

[43]Nomonde Calata testified to the abduction and murder by the South African Police in 1985 of her husband, Fort Calata, an anti-apartheid activist who was one of the Cradock Four.

worn. I cannot help but recall Anne's red fingernails, the defiant red associated with her female impropriety now desaturated to pale pink, the color serving here as a metaphor for the reduction of Anne herself. Anne is diminished not only in being excised as taboo from the family narrative, but in the mentally, physically and financially impoverished decline of her life and the capacity to live with humanity.

Let us return to my mother's account of seeing Anne in the institution. At first, Anne does not understand who the people in front of her are. (One must keep in mind that she has not seen her brother, or any family member, in twenty years.) When my grandfather [Anne's brother] explains who he is Anne has an extreme reaction – it is as if she is thrown beyond herself, totally overcome by her emotions. My mother recalls not only that Anne was crying but describes her as going 'totally berserk', grasping at her [my mother's] father and flinging herself onto him. Just as Krog's description prompts me to visualize her experience of Calata's reaction and expression of pain and emotion that breaks language, similarly I can visualize Anne's reaction through my mother's recounting of her experience as witness to this event. Especially intriguing is the concept of sound included within these narratives. The reader is aware of the presence of a sound being made within both accounts because the text refers to it, yet there is no further description of this sound. In convoluted ways, the sound is present as a reference, but then it is abandoned, absented in discussion, an omission which evokes the missing sound. Thus one cannot experience the sound in the same way one can imaginatively experience the rest of the events, of and in the testimonies, which are intricately described and become visually accessible. Unlike their descriptions of the clothing the women wore neither Krog nor my mother attempts to describe these sounds, *despite* the sounds being crucial embodied emotional affects which impact their senses in the experience of the respective events. The emphasis Krog places on Calata's wail however is what I find most important because she describes this sound as the very destruction of language. I perceive my mother's experience of the sounds Anne made as a similar event. The sound that

breaks language, the same language employed to seal Anne's fate as hysteric, is made by Anne, the 'hysteric', herself. In my opinion these moments where language is shattered are moments where the true witness finds, and can find, a semblance of her own expression within the surrogate's testimony. This expression is made by the 'true witness' herself and relayed as an inaudible sound, a place that marks Anne's own voice that presences through its absence almost independently within the surrogate's testimony.

In both Krog's and my mother's testimonies, their experiences rendered sensory imprints. It is these that communicate the true witness' expression most adequately. My mother experienced these events by seeing and hearing them yet they are registered in the body as feeling – which, to return to Bennett, as described in her writing on sense-memory, is an instance of 'seeing feeling' (2003; 37). I argue that it if we allow a synesthetic interplay between such sensory experiences and the testimony of such experiences we may be able to find a powerful connection with the silenced voices within this archive. Most important in our understanding of these voices is that they must express themselves outside of language and conventional linguistic-expressive coherence.

In order for there to be understandings of this female archive as a way to find another form of expression so that languages of the unsayable and unsaid might be communicated, we need to look and listen by feeling, and feel by looking and listening. I again refer to Derrida who spoke about blindness in the archive in his lectures at the University of the Witwatersrand, referring to a poem by Andrew Marvell:

> It is ordinary that when we weep, it is our eyes that fill with tears […] we weep not from any other organ, but only from the organ of sight, and that we do so in a way that blinds us […]
>
> Thus let your streams o'erflow your springs,
>
> Till eyes and tears be the same things:

> And each the others difference bears;
>
> These weeping eyes, those seeing tears
>
> If seeing in blindness provides an image of knowing in passion, then the seeing tears is an image of knowing in compassion.
>
> (Harris, 2002: 77)

As surrogate witnesses in this female archive, looking and listening register in ways different to the norm, and this archive where these testimonies reside is created through methods other than those employed within traditional understandings of the patriarchal archive. If we embrace these methods and view the eye as not only capable of registering sight, or the ear of registering sound, but imagine them able to open up into intricate webs woven of frail and visceral threads, then eye and ear form affective channels of access into the powerful sensory repositories of the female archive and its otherwise closed archives. In this way, vulnerable, insignificant, amorphous archives such as my female family archive can become visible and heard, and lives like Anne's can be unforgotten.

Chapter Three

Surrogates

Introduction to the Surrogate beyond the 'Witness as Proxy'

sur-rog-ate … *n* ~ (**for sb/sth**) (fml)

person or thing that acts or is used instead of another, substitute; fiction is a poor surrogate for real experience. ○ [attrib] a surrogate mother, ie a woman who has a baby on behalf of another who is unable to have babies herself.

(*Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*, 1992)

In this chapter there is a constant to-and-fro between the female archive as an archive of thought and as an archive of touch. I also move concentration between the absent and the present, and to achieve this I enter the interior archive of thought and entertain its relationship to the physical world, as manifested in the surrogates that family members create. I employ the concept of a surrogate – in effect a form of proxy or substitute – in order to describe how people, objects and spaces are used within my female family archive. How we interact with and employ people, objects, and spaces within the family – and therefore the archive – involves not only gestures of similarity and relation, but of interchangeability. In other words, through the process of substitution, an object comes to stand for a person in a deeper sense than mere mimetic representation. The object, for example, has the power to 'become' something other than its obvious material self. The object may become merged with the deepest 'being' of a person's life, and in doing so, blur the boundary of object and subject. As my discussion

will show, there are complex relationships between these three surrogate 'sub-sets' of people, space and object; connections are always changing and evolving, this constant state of motion creates a strong current as well as undercurrents. These fluid movements deep within the family archive that my dissertation seeks to originate require intricate navigation. The connection between surrogates runs, flows, creeps and crawls into the orifices, folds and crevices where concepts of sign and language cannot enter. Because this current permeates beyond reason it is extraordinarily powerful in effecting affective links. As researcher, writer and artist I approach this navigation from an imaginative capacity that aims to express in/between word and image.

These relationships between a person and the various forms of materiality I designate as surrogates, which surround her, or him, are the most difficult-to-access area of the archive to dwell in, and thus the richest. The relationships generated by the reverberations that arise between body and person in space not only create and constantly recreate the myriad meanings through which we, as individuals and members within a family, mould our lives. These unsettling reverberations are also productively risky, because elusive; they produce resonances that threaten the familiar structures of all we hold dear, even questioning why we hold them dear. The *why* behind the *what* speaks of the reasons for and methods with which we create the archive of 'what we hold dear'. The archive we as women in my family create, and the reasons and manner in which it is created, is simultaneously what and why we survive the trauma within our family.

In Chapter two I introduced what I argue is the first instance of the surrogate in the archive: the witness as proxy for the 'true witness'. I suggested that the first act of surrogacy is one person for another, or more accurately, one person bearing witness to the life, experience and testimony, of another. Within Chapter two, I chose to rely specifically on Derrida's work in order to navigate and express the complex aspects of bearing and being witness. Now I will move from Derrida to engage a more varied and contemporary theoretical repertoire that assimilates the ideas of female

writers like Hélène Cixous. This is a very conscious and deliberate transposition from a male, even patriarchal, approach to the archive towards a female archival poetics that addresses the embodied act of writing about the archive. The change in my theoretical approach coincides with a shift in the area of focus from an oral archive to a physical archive. As scholars like Cixous suggest, because the female archive is a sensory archive of touch and experience it deranges language and the boundaries of academic disciplines, which is in keeping with the nature of my own artistic-conceptual project for the dissertation. The surrogates used within my female family archive are very particular connections that enable us to move, while necessarily still within language, toward that which is beyond language and the representational. Within this archive, as I have come to realise, is where we can listen to silence, and its valuable expressivity.

This shift is admittedly a paradoxical move, in that the physical archive which becomes the focus of my present discussion concentrates on varieties of *intangible* bond between a person and the objects and places within and against which this person's existence develops. However intangible though, I consider that these relationships – forms of intertwined surrogate, as I am suggesting – are in some sense durable; while they are elusive they are nevertheless able to endure, and in so doing to portray, and suggestively to limit or trace, aspects of the unsayable and unsaid.

I have argued that some alternative is needed for us to enter the interiority of the female family archive of silence and trauma. It is within the realm of the surrogate that this alternative might become less opaque, and my work will continue on from the analytical discussion of the research text itself toward the practical opportunities offered within the creative space of the artist's book in order to reach beyond the veil and find moments of entrance to my female archive. Understandably, it is most powerfully in the artist's book that I give an alternative expression to the archive I have inherited, and which in this dissertation I have sought to re-imagine with the proximities and distances that creative and intellectual strategies enable. In the artist's book, I reach beyond verbal language to rework different

mediums of photography, collage and script, in order to create innovative relations and connections that evoke synesthetic experiences. These strategies create a reverberative acoustics that make the (otherwise missing, silent) female voices in my family audible.

In his essay "Thing Theory" Bill Brown asks whether

> [W]e really need anything like thing theory the way we need narrative theory or cultural theory, queer theory or discourse theory? Why not let things alone? Let them rest somewhere else – in the balmy elsewhere beyond theory. From there they might offer us dry ground above those swirling accounts of the subject, some place of origin unmediated by the sign, some stable alternative to the instabilities and uncertainties, the ambiguities and anxieties, forever fetishized by theory.
>
> (2001: 1)

Of course, his questions are rhetorical provocation. There is no space in which things can exist 'merely' as themselves. Yet Brown's discussion does speak to a crossing-over towards a sphere of academics in which things acquire an illimitable vitality beyond the reasoned logics of theory, even 'Thing Theory'. Brown is urging us towards a look at 'things' as life forms that can lead us as scholars to a possible alternative to the analytical tendency towards theoretical overload, an alternative that constitutes a necessary avenue within my present study. Since in my research I have found that it is not really possible to remove oneself from the realm of theory, I argue that working from a multidisciplinary theoretical ambit *towards* an animatedly entangled 'alternative' approach is both more prudent, and more generative. By employing this method the text is presented to readers as richly inclusive and aware of various discursive fields, immersing itself within ideas such as Thing Theory exactly because these areas of study engage and encourage a necessity for movement beyond even their own academic systems. That said it is also imperative for this

study to *move through* the theory in order to reach toward alternative modes of expression, that impossible 'balmy elsewhere beyond theory'.

In this chapter, then, I move from one theoretical framework or tactic toward another, continuing my movement 'through' the theory, and shifting from philosophically dense texts toward more literary approaches through poetic dislocation and fragmentation of the text in order to make the text mean in different ways than merely descriptive language. This method is unsettling; it will disrupt the scholarly text that you are reading presently, and culminate in an 'exit' from the thickets of theory into the artist's book where I offer an affective, ephemerally expressive approach to the challenges of my female archive. The artist's book is an assemblage of fragments from my female family archive, as related to the aspects I discuss within the dissertation. These fragments are mediated and rendered and re-rendered through a variety of mediums.[44]

In the dissertation text, the metaphor of a crime and crime scene can be applied to describe and illuminate my method of slowly unpacking familial trauma located within my female archive. My purpose here is to render a series of previously invisibilised crimes *visible*, the different voices of the protagonists elusively audible. The crime scenes are often extremely subtle and speak only in intermittent ways, meaning that in my doctoral study the analogy of a crime holds far more psychological nuance than it does empirical fact. In Chapter one, you will recall that I look at the testimony of the witness who is also the victim, in order to develop a view into the events and an understanding of the perpetration of the crime. Chapter two concentrates on the victim and witness herself as a surrogate and alternate entrance to familial trauma focussing on Anne as a missing entity, at once unsettling victim *and* witness, an absent imprint or remnant of her trauma that cannot speak for herself or be directly interacted with. In the current chapter we will investigate what can be envisioned as the scene and setting of the crime in order to find evidence that offers various modes of processing and accessing both the present and absent.

[44] This will be discussed in more detail as the dissertation moves along.

Moving with/in and through Theory

> Woman must write her self; must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies - for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history - by her own movement.
>
> (Cixous, 1976: 875)

In the process of writing woman and woman writing herself while writing herself into history, she is faced with the paradox that language always falls short of articulating or expressing female experience because language in its structures and systems has been an oppressor of women, a device with/within which women have been silenced and marginalized. I as a female writer and the female subjects of my study can only ever be something partial, a cleft within this text even as I seek to offer an embodied sense of various female lives. In order to convey this paradox, I need to create a movement beyond the known, beyond the established boundaries between academic disciplines and coherent theoretical approaches... in order to depart from the inherited correlation of language and sign that signs woman as lack.

Cixous is useful here. In "The Laugh of the Medusa" she writes:

> If woman has always functioned "within" the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes and stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this "within", to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. And you'll see with what ease she will spring forth from that "within"—where once she so drowsily crouched—to overflow at the lips she will cover the foam.

(1976: 887)

The metaphor of 'foaming at the mouth' is an expressive and embodied excess that takes us back again to Anne and her epilepsy, as discussed in Chapter two. Her seizures were caused by the trauma she endured yet they also served as a very violent reminder of that trauma – a physical expression of the trauma that lasted her entire life. In addition, my own experience of seizure has become a felt link to Anne's life, and to my persistent longing, over many years, to find a way of archiving her life and those of other women in my troubled family. The gaping mouth which foams; the teeth which bite the tongue... in my own doctoral work, such forms of embodiment become expressive in and of a female archive, rather than signs of abjection.

As Cixous makes clear, the oppression of the female body necessitates certain departures from male governed discourses because the patina of the physical lives we bear, as inflicted and imprinted on the body, can best be approached as forms of *multiple*, which elude one field of theory or one mode of expression. Only by striving to find 'exploded', 'dislocated' avenues of thinking and expression can we attempt to advance, maybe even slightly touch upon, the very skin of 'the woman' as she is maligned with/in language. In my project, I find that we must risk venturing not so much beyond theory but rather onto and inside the thresholds between different disciplines of academic theory – the areas of the in-between. This being said, I must reiterate that in order to reach these edges of the 'in-between', and to edge in, one must wade through the density of theory itself. We have to commence by working from within the male discourses in which women have had to function but we should not aim to reside in them longer than we need to.

Cixous describes a 'within' that refers both to a visceral and emotional interiority, but also to the 'within' of male discourse which subsumes woman. This constrained location may seem but a symbolic, in relation to the language practices of individual men and women, but precisely *as a*

pervasive informing structure it cannot be denied. It is from within that we should explode this present state of existence and operation, in order to discover other states. The challenge, though, is that we have to know some version of female self that is contained within this 'within-ness', mastering this discourse in order to 'seize' it successfully and dislocate it from these longstanding and naturalised foundations. Women – in their varied, intersectional social positionings – have to create formations that can facilitate outward movements away from male discourse (even while we continue variously to be located *within* this discourse), at the same time as we well up inwardly in a movement toward more validating modes of female language. As Cixous advocates, this is to take abstracted discourse bodily into our own mouths, and from the throat of our corporeal interior to make a different language of disruptive sounds.

move into an other word than language

a word for touching

and seeing

a slow

dislocated

floating sound

make the lines on paper only

to burn them

to burn it

release the bodied word

through the smell of burning paper

Derrida gives some clarity here, describing Cixous' oeuvre as an expansive, process-oriented "undecidable writing" (2006: xii). Her texts and procedures are:

> [P]otentially incommensurable with any library supposed to house them, classify them, shelve them. Bigger and stronger than the libraries that act as if they have the capacity to hold them, if only virtually, they derange all the archival and indexing spaces by the disproportion of the potentially infinite memory they condense according the processes of undecidable writing for which as yet no complete formalisation exists.
>
> (2006: xii)

In the present section of the dissertation, it is within this realm of undecidable writing that I wish to move, the very language within which I write being necessarily uncertain rather than assertively knowing; aiming for a provisional, dislocated series of responses to the female family archive. Cixous' writing moves beyond what the library can hold, deranging archival order and the archive. This is not to invite chaos. Instead, it is a feature of a female archive, meaning that it is not only language that should be exploded and seized, that should take on a state of undecidedness, but the conception, practices, functions and nature of the archive itself. These aspects that a tactically female language embodies have the powerful capacity, the potential, as Derrida explains, to become the core characteristics of that processual accumulation that is the female archive. The female archive exists beyond the reaches of the library; it reaches beyond bureaucracy's systems of organization and identification towards an always never-fully-determined elsewhere… Beyond monumental archival systems and collections… Beyond inherited systems of naming… Beyond the enclosed spines and covers of books… Beyond the masterful expression of languages and words on their pages. This element of the beyond is, as Jacqueline Rose writes in "Feminine Sexuality", part of the objective

> to retrieve the woman from the dominance of the phallic term and from language at one and the same time. What this means is that femininity is assigned to a point of origin prior to the mark of symbolic difference and the law. The privileged relationship of women to that origin gives them access to an archaic form of expressivity outside the circuit of linguistic exchange. This point of origin is the maternal body, an undifferentiated space [...].
>
> (2000: 63)

These ancient methods of expression that operate beyond the sphere of language is the female archive. This prior point of origin that exists before and beyond language implies that the female archive, discarded and disregarded as it might be in status, is not only much older than the bureaucratic male archive but richer, superior. If it is more fragile because it often exists in less overt and more ephemeral forms, rather than self-evidently in designated official archives, annals or book history - *because* it is not easily 'located' and thus targeted, I argue that it cannot be destroyed in the ways traditional archives are vulnerable. When Ricoeur writes of the "untold story" he speaks of the "'pre-history' of the told story" which is similar to Rose's concept of a prior point of origin (1984: 75). Ricoeur continues: "this 'pre-history' of the story is what binds it to a larger whole and gives it a 'background'. This background is made up of the 'living imbrication' of every lived story" (1984: 75). Ricoeur's untold story, like the female archive, finds origin in a 'pre-history' which is a place of lived experience that is both before history and outside of language. This place of origin is the mother's body and of the mother's body – a site of 'archaic expressivity'. In "Grandma's Story" Minh-Ha, as previously mentioned in Chapter one, writes: "The world's earlier archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand [...] The speech is seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched" (1993: 5).

Crucial forms of female archive therefore exist in women's bodies and minds, and in our relationships to and with people, spaces and things, through the repeated practices of our everyday lives. The location of such a female archive, I suggest, encompasses both the interior, or psychological, and physical, thus unsettling received relationships between concepts such as outside and inside, absence and presence. In more plain-speaking terms, this 'living imbrication' can be described as lived experience, for this is the space where physicality and interiority meet. Experience is a place where concepts such as inside/outside and absence/presence cease to be abstractions and come into embodied being; they exist, manifest and create at the same time. Thought and touch meet within the processes of experiencing – processes that include acts of registering, resonating, confirming, capturing and creating. Foucault offers an arresting description of experience when he discusses Andre Breton's work in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*:

> [W]hat we really owe to him alone is the discovery of a space that is not that of philosophy, nor of literature, nor of art, but that of experience. We are now in a time when experience – and the thought that is inseparable from it – are developing with an extraordinary richness, in both a unity and as dispersion that wipe out the boundaries of provinces that were once well established.
>
> (1998: 174)

Foucault sees Breton's writing through the agitations of the "domain of experience" as having effaced established cultural conventions, categories and systems of understanding, his method of simultaneous gathering and spreading (across disciplines and dreams) "revealing unforeseen kinships, proximities, and relations" (1998:174). This "enabled him to open up to possible languages domains [sic] that had remained silent and marginal until then" (1998:174). Here, it is also worth remarking Cixous' contention that feminine writing, while a powerful resource of women writers, can also be an aesthetic used by certain male writers, in their desire to move beyond

the delimitations of polarised systems. In my own study, it is this still relatively other, under-explored realm of experience that must and should become the subject and method of a female family archive, which is established, as Foucault might suggest, via contradictory yet complementary impulses of both unity and dispersion.

In understanding the female family archive, a degree of unity is achieved by orientating with/in/within theory in order to move through it to a place of alternative expression where dispersion can be welcomed as an unusual, fluid element of archival practice. In doing so my attention falls closely on objects such as furniture, letters, textiles and clothing, as well as on the photograph or image. Sound, light and colour (refracted light) serve as recurring sub-themes and metaphors that facilitate synesthetic movement among the modes of expression and archival practice within my female family archive and are adapted in alternative forms of expression through the visual and poetic work I create.

As I have stated, the work I create as artist, and as writer, becomes my surrogate of and for this female archive as well. Conscious of this interventionist surrogacy, within my art practice I have concentrated on processes of removal which generate implications of gap or aperture, and yet still hint at presence. These processes were achieved via reinterpretations in different mediums and methods of cropping and playing with scale. For example: I projected slides and painted them onto canvas. These were paintings of light and not of a physical subject matter or depictions of a physical image. They were images purely rendered by light dispersed onto canvas. This reinterpretation (indeed re-mediation) placed elusive, untouchable light onto textile. I then continued to reinterpret these paintings again by scanning them and repeating them in various scales in order to create a pattern much like those on fabrics, these patterns can be seen on pages 134 and 136 in section ‘e, r, w’. These artistic acts mirror the ways in which women in my family create patterns – both aesthetic and of daily practice – through their mending of clothing. In addition, I have reinterpreted photographs in a variety of ways: Concerning my paternal

grandmother, Beatrice,[45] I aggressively employed cropping and scale to render familiar objects into smaller abstract images that prompt emotive impressions through form, colour and texture (section b, c, k, l, m, o, s, pp. 100-109). This collection of images destabilises the photographs of Beatrice as well as the emotional poise of the viewer of the work. It disrupts and disturbs through disturbing conjunctions: tender, almost pretty, images are set in relation to cues of terror and debasement; colour, shape and texture are used as visual metaphors to generate connections for the eye of the viewer to follow, the trace marks of sensory and synesthetic triggers. Similar methods are employed throughout the rest of my artist's book. Words are rendered as images, and no translations are provided for these Afrikaans words so that to the non-Afrikaans speaking reader a word will have no meaning *as a word*; it will materialise only as an image of lines, a drawing created by the women in this family. Objects, textiles and fabrics from the physical archive are reinterpreted by my work, and used to create other interactions and conceptions. One of the more prominent re-interpretations entails my photographing objects from the physical archive, including photographing slides through a slide viewer. These are also constant processes of removal and a palimpsest, haunting presencing that manifest the ongoing processes of loss and my desire for some degree of recovery. In these photographs scale is strongly employed in order to create movements of recognition and re-cognition through rendering the familiar unfamiliar. This is done in order to let these surrogates of the archive mean in ways other than just those intended by the women that created and designated them, and also to draw attention to these inanimate objects as having sensory lives that speak of the intimate, of bodies, skin and touch.

[45]Beatrice is one of the prominent subjects in chapter four.

Between the Archive of Thought and Touch.

I touch your belonging

porcelain paper poultices for my longing

trace the crease of an empty sleeve

to the hand's folds

bedding to your body

pillow to profile

photograph to palm

letters to lips

finger folds of fabric

slips of satin instead of skin

Can I archive the act of touching? In what sense is the body an archive of intimate gesture, and is this archive lost once the fleshy body is gone? How can objects be considered to become surrogates that embody the absent body? Do I, and the women in my family, archive in order to make touching connections, needing to make real the tactile affection of missing touch?

As discussed in Chapter two,[46] UNESCO's new category accommodates "intangible cultural heritage", seeking to preserve "nonverbal forms of

[46] See pg. 59.

knowledge and protects a heritage that consists of practices, dances, rituals and performances" (Assman, 2008: 105). To archive for the purpose of touching is a nonverbal practice enacted in order to facilitate the ongoing liveliness of a culture's future. At the level of the personal female archive, the 'culture' referred to may not overtly bear upon national heritage repertoires, though it might, depending on the group or ethnicity to which the woman belongs. But even such small, daily projects can be considered important constituents of an archive that has yet to come into being, and risks being lost if it is not recognised, at some point, as an archive of everyday femaleness and the often unthought, routinized practices of domesticity that create and sustain 'the family'. Yet it remains curious that in the language of UNESCO, these aspects are described as 'intangible' while *touch* is the very foundation of tangibility. The act of touching is tangible *and* it makes tangible – albeit sometimes in passing, evanescent ways - what otherwise might be invisible. Touch is thus a complex aspect when the archive is concerned. Tangibility offers empirical evidence that serves to prove existence and facilitate the ability to locate or place something. To touch a document, an artefact, is a large component of the traditional concept of the archive (as is the associated proscription of *noli me tangere*, where documents are vulnerable to destruction through trace chemicals and oils that the gesture of touch carries with it). Yet whatever the tactile fragility of archival materials, this form of touching associated with The Archive is related to holding in place, keeping in place, the archive being a system and space of retaining, indeed restraining as a means of protecting in order to retrieve and organise that which is deemed worth storing in the service of the Historical Record. In this instance, touching is a pre-requisite in order to achieve these goals, yet it is not the act of touching, itself, that is archived. Touching is merely a tool, a form of data measurement and quantifiable capacity that serves the 'laws' of the traditional concept and act of archiving.

Within the female and interior archive, in comparison, the act of touching is the very thing, and the very practice, which needs somehow to be archived as a somatic affect. What needs somehow to be recognised and preserved (if

through forms of surrogate) is the very dearness and reverence with which a person invested in this apprehended though uncollected archive is drawn to touch its elements, to gather them - *because* of its fragility, *because* of its history. The history here is a paradoxical sensorium at once projected and intuited as if from within; it is the glancing history of the person the object belonged to, the person who used the object, touched it, carried it, created it, wrote it, even walked past it every day, her shadow falling across a surface with never a lasting trace of passing years except time gathered into dust, into patina, into no sign at all but absence and the hauntological.

By including the practice and experience of touching in the archive we are archiving that which is untouchable; for the act of touching itself cannot be touched, preserved or held. What is needed is a means through which to archive the tangible act and experience of touching which may not leave a trace, but passes, unnoticed except in the merest sensation, or which, perhaps, might be marked only by a slight creasing. Here, then, we enter deeper into the elusive contrariness of the haptic.

In her book *Touching. The Human Significance of the Skin,* Ashley Montagu asserts that:

> Our words and images are poor imitations of the deep and complicated feelings within us. Unsure of touching as a way of sharing with others, we have allowed our fears and discomforts to limit the rich possibilities for nonverbal communication.
>
> (1986: 204)

I argue that in order to include and accommodate touch in the archive we have to reach into these prolific yet potentially hostile possibilities of a communication that is nonverbal. This entails viscerally comprehending touch as the physical inter-act-ion between body and body, and between object and space. Think of clothing worn thread-bare by daily being rubbed against an elbow, or a knee. Think of the linoleum on the kitchen floor, its pattern worn down in a pathway from sink to table to stove. These are

residues of touch, suggestive traces of that which touched, but is now missing, but for signs of wear. Here, we also have to consider the visible and invisible touches and impressions on both the body and the psyche. Physical touch may happen in passing, but cognitive science suggests that it always leaves an imprint on our consciousness, though we are often unconscious of this or, as Montagu suggests, fearful of these touches and thus unreceptive to their possible importance. This lack of awareness exists within the realm of linguistic impression. The relationship between these aspects of touch *is* registered – but not in ways that fit with traditional concepts of language and archive. Concerning the creation of the female archive: these tactile, sensuous, felt interrelations become a way of moving beyond the limits of expression within language and theory, so as to give shape to acts of touching that transpire between a body and its surroundings as well as the touches rendered onto the psyche. I locate this realm of the psyche within the interior archive.

Using the term interior archive I refer to the concept of an idea mediated by Walter Benjamin's notion of an archive which imbricates 'image, text and sign' into "an archive of thought" (Marx et al., 2007: 2). Already, in the dissertation, such interiority has been explored from the perspective of the witness as well as from that of the witness as proxy bearing testimony as surrogate for the true witness. Now, in the present chapter, I aim to find glimpses of this interiority and its expression as it is manifested in the relationship between the interior lives and the physical, or external, worlds of the women in my family.

In fact these relationships, and the possibility of exploring them, are what divide and disintegrate traditional concepts and applications of 'the archive'. Julia Kristeva speaks of a "shattering of discourse", saying that:

> Linguistic changes constitute changes in the status of the subject— his [her] relationship to the body, to others, and to objects; it also reveals that normalized language is just one of the ways of articulating the signifying process that encompasses the

> body, the material referent, and language itself. How are these strata linked? What is their interrelation within signifying practice?
>
> (1982: 29)

What Kristeva suggests is that in order to move beyond traditional applications and concepts in respect of the archive, I must find – or at least imagine – possible links between different strata. In order to do this, it is necessary to approach "[m]aterial forms, as objectifications of social relations and gendered identities, [that] often 'talk' silently about these relationships in ways impossible in speech or formal discourses" (Tilley, 2006: 62). To include touch in this female archive I concentrate on embodying the various layers between the relationship of body-and-body and body-and-objects, as well as body-and-space. As I have already located the three categories of body, object and space within the concept of the surrogate, I will continue by considering the female body as both object and space.

Touching Her Body

Brown, citing Maurice Merleau-Ponty, states that "[t]he body is a thing among things" (2001: 4). This is not to demean or deny the importance of bodies, but to remind us that a body, like any 'thing', is susceptible to understanding via thing-like properties. People objectify and fragment bodies for different reasons while using their own and other people's bodies for a variety of reasons: imputing meaning, establishing relationships, forming connections within networks of identity, societal context and family. This is a large and complex area and I will focus on the agency of the body as object within a particular environment by concentrating on the women in my family as they operate, and are operated upon, within this relational nexus. Moving within trajectories of 'body-as-thing', I conceptualise the body object as a surrogate, and explore its relationship to things and to the

spaces in which this body-object relation is employed in dealing specifically with familial trauma, pain and loss. In *Precarious Life* Butler writes: "The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to violence, and bodies put us at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of all these as well" (2004: 26). Moving towards the body as a surrogate demands that we look at the body within the realm of its physical environment; the body as a version of an object itself as well as, and at the same time, the body as a site where the operations of the family can be traced. I will focus specifically on the body as a location of trauma and loss within the family. From this perspective the body can be approached as both the scene of a crime as well as physical evidence within that scene.

As I have indicated, some aver the female body as a point of origin prior to language – a locale that we should both return to as well as liberate from the constraints of language in order to move toward other forms of expression. In my opinion this cannot be done without invoking the concept of the uncanny. I have already discussed this Freudian concept in Chapter Two as describing the relationship between *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, the familiar and genial and the unfamiliar and disagreeable which unsettles precisely because it disturbs familiar norms even while remaining somehow familiar (1919: 4). These concepts have a dual existence – it carries with it the spectre of its opposite as both exist in the "heim", or home - the home is the place of origin for both the familiar and the unfamiliar. Expanding on this the words themselves thus become uncanny as well because they hold both sameness and otherness at once. Because the concept of familiar carries its opposite, it is always accompanied by the threat of its own undoing.

Freud extends these dual and menacing qualities of the uncanny as it relates to the concept of home to the mother's body as well. According to Freud female genital organs are designated by males as uncanny: "This *unheimlich* place however is the entrance to the former *heim* [home] of all human beings, to a place where everyone dwelt once upon a time and in the beginning" (1919: 15). The female body is not merely a point of origin; it is a

space and location. The female body is the origin of the concept of 'home', the mother's body being a surrogate space and a place of 'proxy' for 'home" while she carries her child and the mother's body subsequently remains the first reference of home. Through the mother acting as a surrogate home the mother's body is also a physical home or place of existence and origin. And if one considers the concept of home (both as it is represented within the mother's body and extended towards the familial concepts of home), it always entails aspects of doubling as both what 'home' represents and the physicality of 'home' always reside within contradictions. Home, both as the mother's body and family home, is the familiar, the inside to an outside. Yet this inside becomes the unfamiliar through our departure, from the mother's body or the family home, to the outside – thus embodying both location and dislocation.

The uncanny reveals a threatening instability at the core of the concept of 'home'. Home as signifier, far from being associated only with tender care, elicits an aspect of volatility, and a constant awareness of being vulnerable to possible violence. In trauma studies, this threat of violence in the home is often located between the boundaries of outside and inside. In *Unclaimed Experience, Trauma, Narrative and History*, Caruth describes trauma as a state where "the outside has gone inside without any mediation" (1996: 59). The instability at the core of home and the family is both *why* and *where* trauma is created and perpetuated. It's not surprising that the very word presents, to my mind, cut by slashes that disrupt easy assumptions of coherence and nurturing, strained associations of bond and break: fami/liar/ly. Familial trauma is the introduction of the outside, the unfamiliar, in/into the in/ner/side of the family, and its familiars. Trauma is where violence, as it is considered to exist as a threat outside the home, the family, and the familiar, reaches 'within' the home - thus providing the opportunity for 'outside' to enter the interior of the home and the family. Within the 'communal' interior of home and family the individual is located and serves as an aspect of the interior to the family as a group. However the individual represents more than one mode of 'inside', the individual consists

of the interiors, orifices, of the physical body as well as the interior of the psyche. For the individual the meeting of trauma inside the home and the family turns these insides into outsides and culminates in the collision of outside and inside in their body and psyche – as a result the familiar of family and home as well as the familiar of the self is rendered unfamiliar.

This inherent/inherited dichotomy introduces so many tensions operating within the female archive. By viewing the mother's body from the perspective of Freud's concept of the uncanny other aspects of placement and displacement become visible. One of these is an interaction between the body and the theory; the female body is given over to terminology but at the same time this terminology, language itself, is given over to the body as a place where it resides and finds its origin. Throughout this study academic theory locates and dislocates the female body yet the female body, through its resistance to definitional language and 'simple' representation, does the same to theory. I will now move on to look at other contradictions and separations within this archive. One of these contradictions reside within the act of touching; it is the physical and psychological touch of trauma that contributes to the creation and existence of this female family archive yet touch also becomes an integral part of how this archive operates and breaks with traditional boundaries of the archive.

Archive of Nothing - Between Touched and Touching

Nikolas Rose, sociologist and social theorist, suggests that there is a need to move within the relationships between the individual's palpable, fleshed body, the imperceptible psyche and the environment the individual dwells in and interacts with:

> Human being is emplaced, enacted through a regime of devices, gazes, techniques which extend beyond the limits of the flesh into spaces and assemblies. Memory of one's biography is not a simple psychological capacity, but is organized through rituals and

> storytelling, supported by artefacts such as photograph albums and so forth [...] The regimes of passion are not merely affective folds in the soul, but are enacted in certain secluded or valorised spaces, through sensualized equipment of beds, drapes and silk, routines of dressing and undressing, aestheticized devices for providing music and light, regimes of partitioning time and so forth.
>
> (2000: 321)

This nuanced process can be activated by reading spaces and artefacts as pieces of surrogate evidence that carry the echoing imprints of the bodies they come into contact with. Rose's depiction of what he calls "the regimes of passion" is what attracts me most, since the term 'passion' offers so many contradictory avenues relevant to my conceptual and creative process in this dissertation. 'Passion' immediately takes me back to Derrida's *Archive Fever* where the word refers to an urge, a drive or lust – something that simultaneously propels and yet also grips. Passion, like fever, always carries a threat of destruction both for the one it consumes as well as for the object/s of passion. The archive and regimes of archiving, like the systems of creation and perpetuation of concepts of family, can simultaneously embrace and stifle.

These regimes are said to exist in the relatively ethereal, trans-substantial 'folds of the soul'. Though I do not use the term 'soul' when I refer to the interior archive I maintain it is an apt description, constituting a lovely move towards a more poetic sphere, away from the established theoretical discourse in which terms such as the 'psyche' tend to assert conceptual authority. 'Soul' also encapsulates how intensely personal these relationships between the individual and her/his surroundings are.

Rose's discussion refers particularly to photograph albums, places, furniture, textiles and clothing. He also considers the routines created with these properties, and how this habitual use relates to time. Music as well as light is also referenced. Within my probe into what I have designated 'the

surrogate' my focus is very similar: I concentrate on everyday routines and the ways in which they create meaningful connections within the environments in which, and upon which, these routines are performed by looking at objects, furniture, textiles as well as photographs. Here, too, I often concentrate on what the creation of surrogates does to concepts, among them, for example, time.

archive of nothing

in this archive

folds are delicate

holding small things

hope

in the ability of fragility

here and there

some substantial substance

mostly just something faintly

between your fingers

a feint touch

or feint smell

taste

murmur

still

for mother

me

meaning

without

nothing

The archive is a creative inheritance which always entails both a pleasure and a burden. Cixous writes:

> We are responsible for something that has been transmitted – an inheritance – which is a treasure of good and bad memories, of memories and archives [...] of which you have to take care. We must hand our inheritance on [...] So, we are responsible for the house, for the family: for the archives. We are in charge of this body of traces that we will hand over to the next generation. Not because they will believe in the body of thinking – they can change sides – but because they have to make their nests, as birds do, with all the bits and pieces [...].
>
> (2008: 154)

This description of inheritance as a body of traces is something I want to unpack. Our physical bodies are indeed part of what has been bequeathed us – what we look like, our colouring, shape, size, textures, proportions – all are aspects of others, whose genetics we inherit. In addition, we inherit a familial body of trace dispositions inherent in our physical and mental tendencies, be these high blood pressure, epilepsy, depression or alcoholism. There is also always that aspect of inheritance that becomes part of our bodies through the residues, physical and mental, that are left on us through generations of familial trauma.

A more familiar notion of physical inheritance comes into play through the material objects that we inherit, whether officially or more informally. This inheritance consists of the things others purposefully leave for us, in the sense of specific bequests, but also the things those others merely leave behind throughout the wake of their lives, but most especially after their death. In addition, there is the inheritance of a body of knowledge as well; things we are taught by society and family, which we in turn enact, such as religion, gender roles, and manners. Within the female archive these varied aspects of inheritance are 'given over' and received in ways that fall beyond the traditional. Adrienne Rich writes about such exchanges:

> Mothers and daughters have always exchanged with each other—beyond the verbally transmitted lore of female survival—a knowledge that is subliminal, subversive, and preverbal: the knowledge flowing between two alike bodies, one of which has spent nine months inside of the other.
>
> (1977:221)

As I am suggesting, the inheritance between women exist beyond parameters merely of overt expressive linguistic exchange. The very process of experiential exchange between mother and daughter – indeed, between women in a female lineage – creates more subtle, complex exchanges which layer theory with the quotidian. Consider, for instance, that my mother, like the other mothers who feature within this text, did not enter an academic world of theory and discourse, as I have done. The women in my family only have high school educations; neither my mother nor my grandmother finished school. The exchanges between the women in my female family archive are discovered through embodied, experiential modes that are far removed from the self-reflexive linguistic-conceptual methods I apply within this study. And yet, I suggest, they can and should still be viewed as texts. Rich speaks of the relationship between mother and child, suggesting that the child "is a piece of reality, of the world, which can be acted on, even modified, by a woman restricted from anything else except inert materials

like dust and food" (1977: 20). It is in this sense, for example, that the women in my family could be said to have 'written' on and through their children, creating living 'textbodies' and an archival lineage through emotions, actions, and ideas which were variously enacted, transferred and effected upon their children – and, of course, also *adapted* by their children, through time. It is also important to appreciate that these forms of relational exchange may not in the moment be deliberate or conscious, but may fall within the 'subliminal, subversive and preverbal'. For the present study, my own decision has been to create a text within language that draws on academic theory as well as everyday experience, seeking visibly to establish, and transfer, this elusive archive I have inherited in ways that were not available to the women in my family. They did not have the avenues of comprehension, exploration and expression my education has offered me.

I understand that in choosing to examine my female family archive from perspectives outside this archive – employing methods not used by the women who feature in this archive – I have created a split, of sorts. This then speaks to the challenges of absence and presence; of within and without, that I must negotiate. While I am inextricably linked to this female archive, a part of it, I am also apart from it. As Cixous writes "[t]here is always a conflict between living and writing […]. There is a struggle" and this has been a very acute struggle for me (2008: 16). The dissertation work has taken me places, both physical places as well as places of the mind, which I would never otherwise have visited or entered. In order to locate my female archive and give expression to how it functions I have had to immerse myself deeper into the archive and, at other times, almost aggressively, violently, dislocate myself from it, in order to generate critical distance.

So many things I cannot unsee or unhear. I am deeply implicated, carrying the traumatic experiences of others in my very body. Yet, as entangled as I am in the female lives of my family, I am also severed, because I enact so many contradictory roles that remove me from the experiences of my female relatives, to various degrees. Like Cixous, I am deeply aware of the fact that "writing is an extraordinary violence", and that in establishing the interior

archive "I transpose, I transfigure from the living, I nourish myself on the flesh and blood of those around me" (2008: 129).

Cixous states:

> I think that most people who write truly, vitally, write in relation to death [...] if I were threatened by my death, or the death of another, I would immediately let go of the paper. Because it's a screen: it's at once what gathers, what envelops, what protects, but its separate from the body, it's not skin. And skin is more precious than paper.
>
> (2008: 17)

My female archive is an inheritance comprising so many forms (and representational conceptions) of body, skin and wound. Skin, in my opinion, remains the most precious of these. At a young age my mother taught me something that, though seemingly simple, has become a crucial originating impulse of my doctoral work: 'people are the most important thing'. Skin will always be more precious to me than paper because people are the most important thing. And yet, we create surrogates for the lost skin and the touch of this skin. And so I would like to move forward, in this text, that also serves as a paper surrogate for my female archive, in order to look at what we as women in this family do to and with the surrogates we create.

Where Skin and Paper Meet

In her article on navigating loss in memoirs of textured recovery, Amy Prodromou explains that she applies her method of reading "as a way to illustrate this 'in-between' space" (2012: 58). Within the wide field of the study of loss, bereavement and grief I want to focus on this 'in-between' by looking at the creation and employment of surrogates within my female family archive.

In Kathleen Fowler's study of grief memoirs she notes, referring to Kathleen R. Gilbert, that "[w]e need to create stories to make order out of disorder and to find meaning in the meaningless. This 'drive to story' seems particularly strong when one is confronted with death, loss and grief" (2007: 525). The women in my family have an impulse to story that is expressed in the surrogates they create, specifically when faced with loss. Yet it is not only loss but also the fear of loss that impels our creation of the archive, for the archive is the collection and creation of surrogates against loss, at once object and practice. The physical archive can be viewed as an archive of paper, a layering of physical surfaces as substitute for the skin of the person we wish to touch and interact with. This archive is where and how we re-enact modes of touching via the physical surrogates we create to serve as mediums through which we strive to mediate the proliferation of emotions associated with loss and absence. We seek to express these emotions, to combat them, to accommodate them... all in order to manage the flaying burden of loss and absence.

One of the dominant surrogates in this physical archive, that we create and use in order to negotiate, express and deal with the emotions around loss, is clothing. In "Materials of Mourning: Bereavement Literature and the Afterlife of Clothes", Judith Simpson investigates the role clothing plays in creating a relationship between the living and the dead arguing that it allows those in mourning to "process loss and translate the memory of those who have died" (2014: 253). The physical archive made of surrogates is not only employed as substitute for that which is lost or absent, it is also used in an elusive, even obscure capacity beyond obviously designated meanings. I argue that the physical archive is associated with a co-related ambient archive, part of which is the archive of touch. This implies that the surrogate is not just a substitute (despite my having sometimes used exactly this word in relation to surrogacy, for lack of more exact term) but a mode of 'in-between' that enables connection. Much like an umbilical cord, the surrogate is inextricably a link in-between the things and aspects it connects.

Losing Skin and Paper – The Fever of Fear

While interacting with both the physical and oral aspects of my female family archive I have observed that the fear of loss creates a fever, and this fervour serves as a very powerful drive to story, that ultimately leads to the creation of the archive. The archive is created by the fear of loss as well as by the grief that ensues after this anticipated loss. Yet grief does not necessarily include (as prerequisite) death. Prodroumou defines grief as a "reaction to all types of loss, not just death" (2012: 58). Grief may be provoked by a fear of losing one's memory of an important event, for instance. And with the creation of the archive another fear is birthed – the fear of losing the archive itself. Perhaps this is even more acute when we are dealing not with conventional physical archives, but with archival bodies of feeling, and surrogacy such as my female family archive. Concerning this archive I have argued that the women in my family create surrogates as substitutes for touch, or human interaction, and that it is a longing for the deceased that impels this female archiving. Yet our archive does not speak only of the loss of the person; it speaks of the loss of the surrogates we create as well. As Paul Connerton observes in "Cultural Memory", "people are not the only things to vanish. The material culture of former lives does too. It disappears more rapidly as the value attached to it diminishes" (2006: 316). Such an anxiety around the conventional physical archive becomes more acute in respect of a marginalised, undervalued female archive that consists of traces, skin and voices, all fragile, ephemeral elements that serve to facilitate my erratic access to non-linguistic, unheard, unseen connections. Under such delicate conditions, the fear of loss, concerning this archive, is that much greater.

Important too is that for the women in my family their archiving did not manifest through traditional archival practices or forms. The things chosen as worth keeping are not intrinsically valuable, not conventionally precious, and nor is their manner of keeping susceptible to familiar forms of archival analysis in line with the values of historical record. In "Traces of the Familiar: Family Archives as Primary Source Material", Wendy B. Sharer

speaks of the expansion of archival resources, arguing "what gets preserved in archival repositories is often that which is already deemed significant. The materials hidden under the beds and in the attics of friends and family might not, thus, seem appropriate for these collections" (2008: 55). Within this thesis I not only argue, as Sharer does, for the importance of the small personal treasures, things that carry the gathered longings and losses of a life yet in terms of traditional historical discourse are deemed insignificant and hidden under the bed. I argue even for the importance of the bed and the bedding on it, functional objects of ordinary material culture in plain view and everyday use.

Simpson argues that objects "function as symbols, pointing beyond themselves to multiple memories and meanings," suggesting that "there is also a sense in which a person and their possessions interpenetrate" (2014: 263). In my opinion this interpenetration clearly intersects with the spaces of the 'in-between' that Prodroumou refers to, and these are spaces we must attempt to identify and then tentatively to enter, in order to locate the female family archive (2012: 58). By concentrating our focus on this 'in-between' we may find entrance into the private connections between body and archive, between skin and paper, connections variously present/absent in feeling and in materiality and best read as empty shapes of loss. Reading these voided shapes requires one to engage with the text in sensory ways so that experiences might register and generate reverberation.

Our Unaware Archive

Here, it is important to grant that an ordinary female family archive does not reside within an official, public building, though initially, and subsequently through its creation, a piece of archival material is used and displayed within the home which, while a private space, is of course also mediated by forms of the prevailing sociocultural discourses that authenticate official archival architectures. In "Worn clothes and textiles as archives" Carole Hunt asserts that "the home is an accidental archive […] a place of

undervalued and displaced items [...] upon which memory may be fixed" (2014: 226). Unsurprisingly, given the histories of female experience, for the housewives and mothers of whom I am writing, the home is at the core of the female archive; it is the place that encapsulates and embodies their entire lives, a place of creation, manifestation and experience. The home, however, remains in an in-between state as it is both an 'accidental archive' as Simpson suggests *and* also the place of deliberate female archival practices. In my view, it is mistaken to insist on the female archive as purely inadvertent, as this lends it an air of inconsequence that could contribute to its not being viewed and accepted with the seriousness and respect that it deserves. And I fear that an emphasis solely on the accidental would diminish the lives and the relevance of the women associated with the female archive, making light of the women's right to tell of their lives and also hampering the possibilities of research within this field.

Elizabeth Grosz argues that "Women become the guardians of the private and the interpersonal" (1995: 121). And yet despite this women suffer

> homelessness within the very home itself: it becomes the space of duty, of endless and infinitely repeatable chores that have no social value or recognition, the space of the affirmation and replenishment of others at the expense and erasure of the self, the space of domestic violence and abuse, the space that harms as much as it isolates women.
>
> (1995: 122)

Notwithstanding this alienation and constraint, however, Grosz urges that women re-turn to these domestic spaces in order to find acknowledgement for their position within the home, as well as to validate the lives that transpired here. Clearly, female archives, as well as the studies about them, will greatly suffer and fall short if women and their roles within the domestic space are not considered and investigated in terms of the creation of female archives of experience and longing.

Accordingly, I contend that it is crucial to view the archive in an intermediary capacity, and also to extend this quality to the objects and traces which reside within the archive. The object within the archive is a medium to read the archive. Assman proposes, in "Canon and Archive", that the materials in the archive are preserved in a paradoxical "intermediary state of 'no longer' and 'not yet'" (2008: 103). This point to the at-once belatedness and yet vectored futurity of archival repositories: they are sites of things which have happened, and yet which still possess extraordinary powers of becoming, if we only know how to activate them.

This state of the in-between is an especially important characteristic of my female family archive. Not only do the women within this archive reflect a state of homelessness within the home, but the objects in the archive suffer similar states of non-being and states of fragile attributed value, forms of being in-between. This relates even to the ways in which objects are kept, or not. In the domestic space of home, when an object is no longer in use, serving its original functions, it is not formally 'archived' but either discarded or, if the piece seems to have sentimental value or the chance of one day being rejuvenated, it is spatially relocated within the home in an out-of-the-way site, placed at the back of a cupboard, perhaps, or in a box or a drawer. These objects, kept but no longer called upon in daily routine, are then attributed an altered meaning in the system of use and value. According to Margaret Gibson, such melancholy items may serve as transitional objects in that they are "mediating between 'I' and 'you', 'self' and 'other', 'here' and 'there', they materialize, whilst trying to 'fill in' the psychic experience of this gap or spacing. In other words there is an existential dimension to the transitional objects in that they mediate nothing" (2004: 288). The shift in the objects' mode of functioning is associated with the objects' removal to a more hidden area in the home. These objects thus become transitional in their meaning, function and placement or location. Within these reconfigured spaces an object thus acquires existential qualities in addition to its utilitarian attributes, and within the female archive, I argue, such objects should be read as mediating

surrogates for women's lives. The female archive of the home is an archive of nothing, because it consists of such mundane and everyday objects that speak to domestic lives of housewives and mothers, identities that have historically been deemed unworthy of archival status (unless by proxy the objects represent major moments of industrial achievement, or technological advancement, or a woman's sidelong role in the life of a nation or influential man). At the same time this female archive of nothing speaks in new, alternative ways because the archive itself exists, means, and is perpetuated in modes different from the norms of accepted archival practices.

Complicating the conception of archival space that occurs when one addresses the nature of a female family archive, my female family archive resides within a within of the home. The language, here, does the necessary work of disconcerting doubling, in that most of the physical female archive can be found *in* the home, *inside* cupboards, dressers and drawers, in old suitcases, cookie tins, and old shoe and chocolate boxes. While I was initially unaware of this with/in feature of our female archival practice, in the process of accumulating my own materials I have kept (and continue to keep) the pieces I have gathered in similar places, in a within within my home. This layered interiority is important, for these objects that attest to everyday female life do not find meaning because they are publicly curated within museums or displayed within glass cases. No. These remains of everyday life are enfolded within other remnants of everyday life – moving from their existence within the house to an existence deeper and even more concealed within the home. My female archive was found within houses of wood and leather and paper, and it still resides in these (surrogate) houses. I thus designate this fragile, predominantly unconsidered repository as an archive within, an interiority which also correlates with its state as an intimately affective and embodied sensory-emotional authority.

I have said that this female archive is not merely accidental and should not be treated as mere happenstance; otherwise I risk further minimising women's already marginal lives. And yet the women in my family are also, it must be said, not overtly conscious of their practices *as archival*, in the

sense that they have not kept objects (or less tangible 'object memories') in the sense of the mnemonic archival creations as featured in *my* research study. To the women, originally, their attachments to particular objects and everyday practices were private actions against personal, and familial, forgetting and loss, including losses suffered through trauma within the family. These women were unaware that their various acts were not only related but would serve to become the archive I now explore and bring further into being. Yet this fact does not then diminish the weight of their actions. Instead, it serves as another avenue into the lives of these silenced women and an understanding of their archiving.

In Chapter four I will continue by exploring and investigating how the women in my family create their archive by employing and designating surrogates of object and space and how these surrogates serve as poultices for fear, loss and pain. This written document, as a textual archive of my lived, experiential female family archive, also serves as a surrogate. My work is thus a surrogate about a surrogate which means that this dissertation is an archive of paper as well.

Chapter Four

Our Surrogates

Writing

Surrogates

As a point of reference and inspiration for this chapter I turn to Christopher Tilley, who argues, in "Objectification", that another

> way to understand the relationship between speech or language and material forms is to suggest that metaphor is central to both, to the manner in which particular meanings are communicated and synesthetic links are established between seemingly disparate social and material domains [...] the material object may be a powerful metaphorical medium [...].
>
> (2006: 62)

Informed by Tilley's understanding I use the surrogate in its capacity as metaphor while negotiating the labyrinthine meanings of my female archive. These metaphors move inside themes that occur and re-occur within the relationships between body, object, and place. The relationships exist within small moments that are created in separate pockets and yet, through my thought processes, these are however also always bound in interrelation. The tenuous and ambiguous structure of my female archive is aptly negotiated via the word-and image-work of metaphor.

As some of my discussion has already suggested, metaphor accommodates figurative movement, and synesthetic links, both of which shift my text forward towards other modes of expression than obviously academic discourse. I appreciate that, for my reader, it may be a challenge to accept my openness to the affective labours of invisible yet persistent residues,

when scholarly discourse prefers the workings of cogent argument, corroborating illustration, and clear reason. In such a space, what value, you may think, can possibly be attributed to these insubstantial archives of glimmering feeling and faint (*feint*?) transposed memory? But this is a risk I must take, and in the rest of the chapter I offer a collection of acts which suggests the process and power of creating surrogates within the archive. This collection assembles, but also eventually disassembles into loose fragments, a deliberate practice that simultaneously attempts to deconstruct conventional archival notions *and* to suggest possible shapes for elusive female family archives such as my own.

Lettering

Kitchen Tables

Esther Saraga writes about the process of going through her parents belongings after they have died – finding documents, amongst them private letters, scattered about in different places within the home, in sideboards, the backs of drawers, and so on. She explains that "these papers constitute the 'private archive' at the centre of my research" (2014: 27). I found my female family archive in much the same state when I cleared out my grandmother's apartment after she passed away. This archive, as it pertains to the discussions in this chapter, consisted of photographs and letters in old chocolate and shoe boxes, cupboards with clothes passed down through generations, and various functional objects now 'decommissioned' yet still kept. An example is a stacked pile of worn aprons I found in a dark cupboard underneath a window seat. In a large part this collected material has now been expressly constituted as a private archive: it is housed in my home in a cupboard that once stood in my grandmother's bedroom. This cupboard, with all the objects it holds, now stands in my study amongst the various desks I use for writing and making art. In effect, I have not only moved my female family archive into being *as an archive*, I have moved this archive into a room of writing. Here, there is an interanimated reciprocity,

because it is through the gathered materials that I am enabled to write, and it is through my writing that these materials begin to come to life as affective components of a female family archive.

I write. Writing is central to my creation and transmission of this archive, but the women in my family did not have a room of their own; they did not have desks to write at. Nor did they have the desire to record their dailiness *as archive.* And yet they did make the time and space for letter writing as an important mode of female affirmation and connection. In *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, and History in Late Colonial India*, Antoinette Burton underscores that feminist historians have long used unconventional sources such as "letters, diaries, ephemera of various kinds – to write women's experiences (back) into history, and in doing so have tried to establish an alternative archive" (2003: 23). In establishing my alternative female archive I turn to such unconventional sources yet also venture further unconventionality. For instance, where letters are concerned I do not focus merely on the narrative content of the written letter but on the letter as physical object scripted by a distinctive, individual hand, and how the act of letter writing relates to place. At some points, too, individual alphabet letters ('A' or 'i') become important, as do the upward and downward pressures of writing strokes, which leave different degrees of tactical impression on a page. The locations of the objects found within the private archive reveal aspects of this archive – I have referred, for example, to letters found in chocolate and shoe boxes – so too do the places referred to in the letters that comprise my grandmother's private correspondence. This seems an appropriate kind of enfoldedness, a metaphor of the layering of skin and paper and person and place. In two of the letters I found, one written by my grandmother's eldest sister and one by my grandmother's friend, reference is made to where these women are writing these letters:

> Dis vroeg, net-na ses en heel koud vanoggend, soveel so dat ek die kombuis vensters altwee toe moes maak en op my ou plek voor die Esse sit skrywe. Klaar koffie gedrink, honde en kat kos gegee, my Godsdiens gedoen.[47]
>
> T**** (personal communication, January 25, 1974)

> Terwyl die Sondagete sy laaste stoompies prut begin ek maar skryf – sommer hier by die klein kombuis tafeltjie neffens die stoof[48].
>
> J* (personal communication, August 8, 1974)

The communication in these letters expresses the ordinary lives of the women in my family, lives that often happened in kitchens. The kitchen served as the epicentre of their everyday domesticity, the site of their female duty and diligence as wives, mothers, and daughters, and yet it also contained the labours of their desire to connect with people and places beyond the kitchen habitus. The women in my family, and the women who corresponded with them, wrote on tables amidst their daily chores. Cutting chopping whisking writing beating stuffing cleaning penning mending… Christopher Tilley suggests that "[a] primary component of the consideration of objectification processes involves gender relations, the manner in which these are constructed through things. This frequently involved consideration of 'male' and 'female' artefacts in domains of practice" (2006: 63). The reading of the use of space and domestic objects and/or furniture within the home clearly reveals the conventional gender roles within my family. My grandmother, like her sister and friend, wrote at the kitchen or dining room table. Next to the dining room was my grandfather's small study with a desk. Even after he died, my grandmother did not use this space, or move the desk to a spot that might have been convenient for her own writing. The

[47] Translation: It's early, just past six and quite cold this morning, so much so that I had to close both kitchen windows as I sit writing at my old spot in front of the Esse [coal stove]. Already drank my coffee, fed the dogs and cat, did my Bible study.

[48] Translation: While the Sunday meal simmers its final simmer I start to write – at the small kitchen table next to the stove.

study was retained as my grandfather left it – complete with the small mirror and the little case in which he kept his contact lenses. By not disturbing this scene my grandmother in effect created a reverential display honouring her deceased husband's ongoing presence in her life. She cleared a continued space precisely by *not* clearing the space, knowing that his now absence would thereby be presenced via this dedicated site within the home. This small domestic museum of affect, attesting to lost life through the objects which remain, might be a conscious act of creating an aspect of archive on my grandmother's part, since this act of archiving is done to retain the presence of the lost loved one. Yet this act still commemorates the male within the house, valorises the male's importance, preserving his role by allocating both the remaining space and the remaining furniture object to a state of practical disuse and reverential status that morphs towards that of shrine. My grandmother thus (like many women of her generation) perpetuates allocated gender roles even after the patriarch's death. So habituated are these roles, so internalised within her daily and psychic life, that she would not think to disturb the inherited, lifelong gender patterns even once she becomes the only inhabitant of the house – now *her* house – and the matriarch of the wider family network.

In the article "Home Sweet Home", specific attention is paid to the emotional construction of space by elderly people, and the authors assert that when elderly women are widowed a "restructuring of places within the home" ensues whereby the meaning of home is re-calibrated (Christoferetti, Gennai & Rodeschini. 2011: 225). After the passing of her husband the elderly widow becomes the only occupant in the home, many rooms that were used by the husband, such as the study, are not used anymore; often, widows start to eat at a different or smaller table, as well as replace the double bed with a single bed. The absence of the lost spouse is visible through the absence of functional objects such as books and paperwork they were busy with, clothing, towels and toothbrushes etc. In my grandmother's case, her husband's study remained in this preserved state for fifteen years after his death. It was only when my grandmother moved out of that house and into a

small one-bedroomed apartment, the spatial constraints leaving her bereft of both kitchen table and dining room table that she started using my grandfather's small desk. Her now further diminished female circumstances as a long-time widow who must at last re-move from the marital home to smaller accommodation, paradoxically seem to have released her, emotionally, to see 'the desk' *as desk*, an object still layered with the patina of her husband's use, but now present to her as available for her own letter writing. The desk now being used to serve her own needs also reconfigures the meaning of the space in which it resides – in effect enabling her to re-see the space and claim it as her own.

Grosz quotes Irigaray: "I was your house. And, when you leave, abandoning this dwelling place, I do not know what to do with these walls of mine. Have I ever had a body other than the one you constructed according to your idea of it? Have I ever experienced a skin other than the one you wanted me to dwell within?" (1995: 122). My grandmother experienced an analogous state of displacement within the marital home after her husband's death. Though she had served as his house for over fifty years, it is the physical house, even after he is deceased, that keeps her estranged from herself and stranded within her restrictive roles. The very aspect she embodies and represents – the home – is what leaves her without a self – 'homeless within a home', 'self-less within her representation'. Here we are beautifully reminded of the relationship between object and skin once again – the home itself is constructed for her much like the skin she dwells in. The home and the objects it held was the embodiment of her role and status as woman, wife and mother. While still residing within this once-shared environment she could not truly start a process of reconfiguring herself after her husband's death, and the objects around her retained their power. She could only move into new arrangements of self when she moved into a new home. While remaining in the family home she could only recall, and still enact, the designated roles of wife (in relation to {missing} husband). 'Wife' had meaning only in so far as it linked to 'husband'; 'wife' was the primary

site of identity for her, long instilled and still, after her husband's death, powerfully reflected.

The ordinariness of daily life: a woman cooking, a woman cleaning, a woman writing a letter to a friend. These are not great artistic activities and yet I invite the reader to consider the women in my female archive as akin to writers and artists, through their creation of surrogates, in their own right. When considering the impact these surrogates have, the power to touch, trigger, evoke – is this not what writers and artists do? In her article "Recipes, love and forgetting; a sparse domestic archive from colonial Natal" Julia Martin speaks of her struggle to find entrance into the lives of the women in her family (2015). She refers to the difficulties she faced in seeking information about her own female archive in interviews with her mother and describes a breakthrough when her mother mentions that her grandmother baked bread often, and well. This moment triggers in her a sensory surrogate – the smell of the bread, and then further, suddenly, this prompts her to appreciate her grandmother's recipe book as a material surrogate. The recipe book, an object that initially gave no obvious archival insight into the person her grandmother was, now enables her to find a point of entrance into her grandmother's life and home: "Read in this way, the recipe book invoked a sense of the place itself as nothing else could" (2015: 584). I have found something similar in respect of my own project, a meeting of people and objects, of processes and spaces of creation where living and writing, find intersection through skin, touch, and paper.

From letters my grandmother's eldest sister wrote to her:

> Dear I still constantly think of you [and] pray for you and I will always do so, you need not answer this either as I just want this letter to be a life line between us!
>
> T**** (Personal communication, August 15, 1988)

> I see you so often in my mind's eye about your daily doings, coming and goings.
>
> T**** (personal communication, October 12, 1988)

These letters, the language, the marks made on the letters, are not about the archive of paper. The letters are paper surrogates for human bonds. The handwriting on paper serves to embody the relationship between body and body, between the folds of female relation and domestic practice. These letters are objects that function as physical metaphors for relationships. Here, I return to Tilley's idea of the object as metaphor which

> acts to convey information about a variety of symbolic domains through the same media [...] In other words the artefact through its 'silent' speech and 'written' presence, speaks what cannot be spoken, writes what cannot be written, and articulates what remains conceptually separated in social practice.
>
> (2006: 62)

My grandmother's letters speak of many domains through the medium of their physicality. Both the medium and its speech operate in multiple modes. The letters do not just communicate via the language of words on paper, the letters serve as a connection – a 'life line between' the women. The pages of the letters as tangible objects handled by one sister and sent to another become a physical surrogate for the loss of more immediate contact between them, in moving ways attesting to the intangibility *yet* persistent durability of their familial connection and the challenges of trying to 'stay in touch', to summon such close yet invisible bonds into presence. This also percolates beyond the time of their writing, to impact the now of my own writing. Here is a rich tautology. My writing is a practice of archiving where I have committed to imaginatively narrating that close bond which did not materially exist *yet* which was felt to exist, a dyad of existence/non-existence which no longer exists but which *does* still exist in being

evocatively implied and animated in the fragile correspondences of letters written and exchanged between these women.

Wearing

Three Dresses

The physical archive I have inherited and gathered consists largely of paper and textiles, clothing making up the largest part. In "Worn clothes and textiles as archives of memory", Hunt suggests that people "see cloth as […] 'a form of memory' itself, in that the strains, stresses, stains and smells we impress upon it, make cloth into an archive of our most intimate life" (2014: 215). Taking my cue from Hunt I too argue that a dress a woman might inherit – passed down from a maternal grandmother, or perhaps just left behind in a wardrobe, and chanced upon, is a powerful object. The women in my family look at it, touch it with our hands, wear it on our body; we smell it and inhale the trace perfume, the very scent of the woman who has gone but who remains, partly, in the shape of this sensory surrogate. While a woman is wearing this inherited dress, she may hear the sound the material makes as she unfolds the wide skirt. She may experience the sway the slip the crinkle of the textile. Her body reads the text of the surrogate. All of this connects her with a certain person, event or place, a tactile mnemonic that causes her to revisit emotions of the past as well as creatively imagine aspects of that past in the now. In the context of my own female family archive, I act on these generational threads as well as react to them, for these are interactions between person and clothing that render repercussions on both sides. This is how surrogacy performs its elusive affective reach.

wearing

sense experience

interior exterior

soul body

f l u t t e r

t ea ring

now to then

.back again

In her scholarship on material objects and mourning, Simpson asserts that the "clothing of the dead forces the bereaved to act or react: to keep it, to wear it, to hold it or to anxiously avoid it" (2014:256). The clothing of the dead "appears to have agency [...] and this is disturbing" of both emotional poise and of the timelines of pastness and the concluded supposedly associated with death and the deceased. Simpson continues; "[s]uch clothing may be experienced as truly haunting, as pulling at the consciousness of the bereaved, forcing images of the dead upon them and impelling them to reject the cultural imperative to suppress their thoughts of the dead" (Simpson, 2014:256). It is true that certain aspects of loss through death are socially and culturally acceptable – visiting graves, looking through photo albums, displaying photos. Yet acts such as

embracing another's clothing as if it were still inhabited by the person's body; not washing these garments in order to preserve the smell; wearing this clothing unwashed, as is: these are socially disquieting practices, not commonly sanctioned. They are thus enacted privately, even secretly, within the enclosure of the house, a form of sensory archiving practice.

> At times, such as now, it becomes hard for me to write, the physicality of memory is very painful – and I drift from the writing. At times I am no longer a writer or academic but simply a granddaughter and daughter and I am gripped, plucked from the page and from language and thrown into the sensory where I exist for a while purely within the archive, acutely aware of the beautiful burden.

In the physical archive I have gathered – amongst so many articles of clothing, so many textiles, and so many threads – there are three notable dresses: a church dress, a house dress, and a night dress. These are garments that have moved across time, having been worn on the bodies of three generations of women in my family. These three dresses speak through their tactile silence of the female bodies of the women in my family, their intertwined existences and lineages; they embody the women's movements between, and against, experiences of life and death.

The Church Dress

The black woollen dress has a demure collar modestly patterned. The collar is adorned with a few small, amber-coloured beads. This dress was worn by my grandmother to my grandfather's funeral. (Even in describing these relations, I shift them. 'Her husband' becomes 'my grandfather'.) My grandmother had given the dress to me while I was still in high school and I continued to wear it to church, as she had. Yet I only found out that this was the funeral dress when I began to study my family photographs at the beginning of my research.

Simpson argues that "[c]lothing unites the dead and the living most profoundly when it becomes a medium of identification and internalization" (2014: 258). My grandmother's church dress became a medium for her body, and a sense of connection with her. This held even as I wore it when she was still alive, but more so after she had passed away. Yet the dress also became a medium and an avenue to her pain. The material object ignited and facilitated an experience from my body that reverberated into the emotional interior.

When I saw her wearing this black woollen dress in the photographs taken at my grandfather's funeral I felt a sharp pang; I realized in my very senses what she must have felt while wearing the dress that day. The dress was not just my grandmother's dress anymore, because of what I sensed of her experience while she had worn it to her husband's funeral. The dress was suddenly a surrogate for both her body and her pain, and a tactile, embodied mnemonic for my own memories of her. The dress, layered and seamed, pieced together into an apparently uncomplicated whole, stood for her extreme loss, and also, subsequently, for my own projected attempt to connect with the loss of my grandmother. Later, because of what I learned through my research, the dress also became a broader reference that included the secrets surrounding my grandfather's death.[49] This dress was a

[49] These circumstances are discussed in my mother's testimony in Chapter one in the Section titled 'L'. See pg 27.

surrogate for an absent body, for loss and silence. Though it existed within this archive, though I carried it with me and on my body, the dress, like me, my mother and my grandmother, kept these secrets to itself. It did not speak. Could not. In some sense, then, it acutely embodied the silence of the women in my family. Yet I cannot look at this dress and not think of the things I now know. This church dress becomes a clear illustration of what Tilley speaks of when he writes about an artefact's "'silent' speech and 'written' presence" speaking and writing about that of which one cannot speak and write (2006: 62).

The act of keeping the clothing of the deceased is not strange – in fact there are many studies that focus on this role of cloth and clothing. I return to Hunt's research into fabric as 'archives of memory' where she maintains that cloth can be viewed as having its own form of memory through the tensions, blemishes and odours impressed upon it – thus becoming "an archive of our most intimate life" (2014: 215). I agree with Hunt that cloth can be a 'form of memory', and I also assert that cloth in the context of a female family archive requires a reading which is not only analytical but focusses on cloth as a form of experiencing as well.

Christine Mason Sutherland argues in "Getting to Know Them", that in order to research female lives, the research approach should necessarily both understand *and* evaluate, as the lives are "fundamentally bound up with the experience of the material" world (2008: 28). She continues by referring to polythetic meaning as embodied meaning derived from experience, arguing that such experiences can serve as a medium not only between family members but also between the researcher and those whom s/he researches: "Closeness of this kind is especially associated with feminist practices, in which there is 'a link between researcher and researched'" (2008: 28). Her claims prompt me to return to the materials of my female family archive in multivalent ways: with my body *and* with my knowledge of the archive, this knowledge being both personal (as a member of the archive) as well as theoretical (as writer and scholar). Let me use as example one of the ways to view and read my grandmother's church dress.

My grandmother's dress embodies the pain of loss, as I experience both the loss of my grandmother and, by locating the dress in photographs, also the loss of my grandfather through the continued presence of the dress, and the absence of my grandparents. The dress being worn at my grandfather's funeral not only refers to his death but also to secrets around his death. Through this embodied connection this dress now also carries the presence and stain of familial trauma.

By concentrating on the dress as a piece of evidence that speaks of lives and occasions beyond the evident fact of its own material existence, I can imaginatively follow the 'life' of the dress. Used as a surrogate, this dress becomes a metaphor for many people, things, and events. By reading the surrogate as metaphor I am able to move between the realms of public and private that we inevitably encounter when death is involved.

Clothing as material object is specifically well-suited to mediating between boundaries such as private and public as it is so intimately worn on the body yet at the same time it is what the body is covered with in order to exist in an outside or public arena. In "Cloth and Clothing" Jane Schneider describes cloth as a "'social skin' – a covering that, by virtue of its proximity to the body, articulates self with other" (2006: 204). In the initial instance the church dress as surrogate serves such a function as it facilitates a connection between me and my grandmother. But because the dress itself resides in a state of in-between concerning its positioning as both intimate apparel, or covering, as well as a 'social skin', it moves fluidly in its capacity between what are often assumed to be opposites, like public and private. The ability of this object to move between such apparently opposing concepts is what gives it the capacity to mean more than one thing, relating to more than one person, event or emotion. Because cloth moves between the realms of the self and the social it connects concepts of private and public. This characteristic of cloth as surrogate is what enables it to not only be employed as a metaphor but also as medium that facilitates many connections that simultaneously reveal and conceal relations. Let me

elaborate on this by addressing the church dress in its capacity as a medium that simultaneously makes explicit, and yet also implies.

It is important to understand, in respect of the church dress, that there is not just one death involved. The status of this object in the female family archive has been created in palimpsests of time and attribution: by my grandfather's dying; by my grandmother's living; by her gifting the dress to me; by her death, and by my continued life, in which I constantly seek to locate myself in this complex series of familial relations. I agree with Janet Hoskins in "Agency, Biography and Objects" when she argues that "[m]aterial objects can be used to both reveal and conceal secret histories," and that one can find "new narratives around objects linked to pain and violence, objects which hide their real meanings underneath the surface" (2006: 80). My grandmother's dress carries in it a connection to my grandfather's funeral and after making this connection, as I locate her wearing the dress in photographs taken at his funeral, my grandfather's death is then brought to mind. In this instance the dress becomes an object that at once shows and hides as it is both what eventually reveals this memory, of my mother's testimony about the circumstances surrounding my grandfather's death, to me, yet this is the knowledge of a secret event that I cannot speak of and cannot share. The church dress is at the same time that which uncovers in me the most intimate of knowledge, yet is also covers the private and hides it from public view.

I will now shift between the private and public spheres, moving from looking at the dress as it was worn at public events (funeral, church) to the perspective of an affective investigator looking inwards and aiming to connect the dress with the secrets of the private realm of the home. This shift causes the meanings of the dress as object to multiply, transgressing conventionalised boundaries such as past and present, surface and depth.

In *Empathic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art,* Bennett discusses the work of Columbian artist Doris Salcedo, contending that she reconfigures "familiar objects in ways that evoke the losses that households

have borne and the silences that descend in the spaces inhabited by the bereaved" (2005: 60). To some extent this is an apt description of what the women in my family do to familiar, functional objects that come to serve as surrogates. Objects are reconfigured by the everyday life they are exposed to in their functional capacity within the household, the immateriality of the pain, silence, and loss experienced by those in the household reshapes the meaning of the material object. In the instance of the church dress the object carries the meaning imprinted on it by my grandmother's embodied experience which then, via the physical object as surrogate, triggers an emotional experience within me.

Salcedo's works are described as "embedded with a sign of personal trauma" (2005: 60). Similar to the way in which Salcedo reworks familiar objects, often embodied objects such as worn clothing, the women in my family rework familiar objects that communicate in salient ways the silences and traumas within the family and the home. The church dress as surrogate is reworked with my grandmother's body within the locations, and events in which she wore it. By locating the dress in the photograph and thus connecting it to my grandfather's funeral it is also connected to the silences about the trauma that surrounded my grandfather's death that my mother shared in her oral testimonies (as referred to in Chapter one).[50] The amended dress serves as a surrogate communicating personal trauma and pain, it is embedded with in non-verbal ways yet it can do this only because it serves as a medium that facilitates these complicated connections as well. Objects of pain attest to and bear traumas in different ways than a living witness can. What sets these object modes of testimony apart is that they do not speak with and in language – rather they operate as tangible mediums that communicate intangible aspects and events. Such communication takes place in an/other realm by triggering and registering within us emotions, sensory experience, and modes of knowledge such as pain. For this it is difficult to find an expressive language, and yet one's felt belief that the object *is* expressive cannot easily be refuted. This is not as peculiar as it

[50] See the section marked 'L' in Chapter 1, pg 30.

may sound and, indeed, Bennett argues that "a study of pain must incorporate a study of silence and the absence of languages of pain but; most fundamentally, it should constitute a study of the transactions between language and the body" (2005: 48). Her comment leads me to my recurring question: how should I speak of silence and pain with and within this dissertation, a text that is, by its existence, a surrogate, also an object of pain? Plagued by this question I stumble upon Cixous' autobiographical fiction *Hemlock* where the author reflects on her relationship with her elderly mother. In her study Cixous finds a piece of paper:

> a sheet of paper painted with exclamations, arrows, words [...] stretched panicky thin as if the very words had been swept up in the state of flight and fought their way across the margins of the exit, with the result that the word *disappearances* is flattened over an entire line to the point of disappearing. Similarly the words Very painful news were stretched so thin that ppppppaainnn would be illegible to anyone but me – this depicts the feeling of interminability, of vanishing caused by the shock of terror, and the illusion of bottomlessness I must for a moment have felt and which had been triggered in my mother's [bed]room.
>
> (2011: 1-2)

I think about the ways of creating or rendering words – the visual aspects of words. Words as imprints that can operate in other sensory modes and register within the body through such felt, haptic interpretations and not just via the reasoned intellectual processing of language.

I write the word pain, indented on the following page, with a typewriter, rather than using the more remote technology of the pc. Despite sharing forms of keyboard, the typing makes me a more embodied presence in the action. The typing makes me aware less of abstract word processing than of physically processing words at a mechanical level. This writing is very evidently a mysterious, tactile making which brings questions of agency, absence and presence again into play. I hear the metal keys slamming onto

the page with a violent metallic thump – a key thrashes down, pressuring the page into an indentation that punctures the paper in certain areas, the inky imprint of letters bruising, wanting to bleed into the paper.

Touching the page I can trace these grooves with my fingers, faintly feeling the curves of the letters. The word 'pain' lies on the page like a body on a floor.

The word 'pain' slides from my mind into my throat and onto my tongue. I feel the sounds; the breath of the 'p' as it escapes between my lips, the warm vibration at the back of my throat when I create the 'ai' and the flat pressure of the 'n' in the roof of my mouth.

Do not read this word I have written…

pain

The House Dress

One of the summer house dresses my grandmother always wore was of black polyester fabric with white and coloured flowers. The dress became a house dress after being worn thin through years of use as a social or 'town-dress'. These categories hint at the shifts already embedded in the boundaries of public and private we create and recreate with the use of surrogates much like the movement between these spheres we have discussed concerning my grandmother's church dress as surrogate. My grandmother wore this house dress in interviews for my research, and in photographs for my work as artist. I also photographed the dress on its own, laid out on her bed, unaware, at that stage, of the poignant precursor this would be, of her loss.

In "Wearing Memories" Casey Golomski writes about Swazi women's personal use of clothing in mourning. While she focuses her study on women in Swaziland, some of her ideas are relevant to my own thinking. She writes: "for the bereaved, manipulating clothing and material images of the deceased enables intersubjective transformation and psychosocial transitions" (2015: 305-306). This implies that the bereaved are influenced by the deceased's clothing while also performing their own influence on the clothing – there is more than one consciousness at play. My personal interactions with this house dress marked a grieving process for more than just the physical loss of my grandmother through her death. Because my grandmother's dementia had stolen her away from us long before her physical death, I was mourning my grandmother's 'psychic loss,' the absence of her mind, even before she died. When my grandmother went to a care home for the elderly, her mind losing track, I deliberately took this particular house dress from the clothes she left behind. I took the dress because of the accumulated memories I had of her in it – for me, at this stage, this dress held more of her life, the life I knew, than the woman/body that was still present, and fast emptying of her familiar self. I also chose to collect this dress as part of the physical female archive I was assembling, feverishly at this point. Creating this archive had become not only a race

against time but a fight against loss. I was creating surrogates by manipulation and renegotiation in order to relocate aspects of meaning and identity to create a place for that which I knew I was losing: my grandmother. This may seem simply a personal mania, in the face of imminent loss. However, we should allow Tilley's important point that "studies of material culture in relation to movement and loss represent an almost novel area of research" (2006: 70). Here, he specifically singles out the instance of elderly people moving into nursing homes (2006: 70). I agree with Tilley – attention should be paid to our complex interactions with the material world when faced with loss and the anticipation of loss with a particular focus on elderly people as this is indeed an area that has been neglected in research. In "Melancholy Objects" Margaret Gibson addresses the relationship between loss and objects, asserting that,

> [t]hrough death, the most mundane objects can rise in symbolic, emotional and mnemonic value sometimes outweighing all other measures of value – particularly the economic. Even before bereavement objects closely associated with dying family and friends are either becoming memorialized or are already memorialized. This is partly known as anticipatory grief [...] but it relates to a wider concept of mourning as an ongoing process that begins with the earliest psychic experiences of separation and individuation from significant others—particularly mothers.
>
> (2004: 292)

My creation of surrogates like this house dress, done in anticipation of my bereavement, not only related to my own psychic experiences of loss but also to the phenomenon of psychic loss itself. This may be difficult to comprehend: because my grandmother, through dementia, lost the felt and remembered coherence of self that was her life, losing access to the memories of her life, I was also fighting to locate what remnants I could within these surrogates as a way to combat both my loss of the woman I knew as my grandmother, and her own loss of her psychic self. Fighting

against this loss, which I had actually not yet lost, as well as the loss of my grandmother to herself, left me in a strange space between absence and presence. This place spoke loudly, violently, of absence through presence – my conception of absence and presence and how this relates to loss was challenged. I felt loss for my grandmother though she was still present, a loss in presence, a bodily presence that through the increasing gaps of dementia repeatedly only made more present her increasing mental absence. It was as if this sense of loss at that stage was something I felt more acutely than losing her to death, since I had no sense, at that stage, of what it would mean to lose her to death *and yet* in her dementia she also prefigured the eventual loss of dying. How difficult it is to find the words adequate to expressing such intense but amorphous feelings. How to make this mean in a way that a reader will understand my meaning? So I return to what Gibson suggests:

> [t]hese objects are not just mediating between 'I' and 'you', 'self' and 'other', 'here' and 'there', they materialize, whilst trying to 'fill in' the psychic experience of this gap or spacing. In other words, there is an existential dimension to the transitional objects in that they mediate nothingness.
>
> (2004: 288)

My grandmother's house dress re-materialised in this new role through my act of designating it as a surrogate. Furthermore, this surrogate role of the dress was expanded because the morning after my grandmother died I decided to wear this dress to her funeral. This threadbare worn-out house dress. The dress that she had left behind as an inappropriately worn out skin that was shed when she had to leave her own home to go to 'the home' of her old age care. Under such unsettled circumstances, I wore this dress to the public event through which the family marked her death; I wore the old house-dress to church. As for many devout and respectable Afrikaner families, church is revered as a holy place in our family, and thus a place to which you would usually wear your best as a sign of respect for God. But for

me, at that moment, there was nothing more holy than my grandmother's threadbare house dress, an intimately and frailly textured garment-house in which to respect and acknowledge her. Wearing her house dress to her funeral made my grandmother's life visible, anew; *my* presence, in *her* dress, was a provocation to those at the funeral to see and understand the importance of negotiating traditional (*gendered*) modes of private and public as they habitually manifested in the cultural sites of home and church.

To a certain extent this act was an act of rebellion against traditional mores – my grandmother's loss, the extreme pain, to me, of her death, was more important than the niceties of the customary practices I had been brought up with. Paradoxically, these practices were modelled on my grandmother's own cultural customs of politely gendered respect, but I no longer wanted to adhere to such roles, despite these modes being part of my inheritance from my grandmother. In order to offer embodied respect to my grandmother, I needed to rupture the abstraction of convention. In this instance the female archive of feeling, that feature of the private lives and bodies of these women, was more important to me than any respectable archive of proper behaviours, and I chose, somewhat scandalously, to affirm this intimate privacy within the public arena.

In *The Auto/biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Autobiography,* Liz Stanley writes:

> [I]t will be death for some other seeing eye than mine, for my own death is one death I will never gaze back on from any subsequent moment. In this sense 'my' death will never belong to me, only to those who live after and remember.
>
> (1992: 47)

My grandmother's death, like her dress, to some extent now 'belonged to me' – thus in a sense her death was a death for me but not a death for her. This death of my family's matriarch also became a death of certain practices and boundaries that we as family and specifically women within the family had

long enacted. As I continued the doctoral project I viewed the act of my wearing her dress in other ways too. For example, Alice Dolan and Sally Holloway write about "emotional textiles":

> Textiles remain emotionally charged for a myriad of reasons, including [...] the sensation of physical comfort created by the touch of soft textiles on the skin. Furthermore, the ability of clothing to retain the shape of previous owners can evoke the physical presence of long dead bodies.
>
> (2016: 155)

Because textiles have such abilities the dress enabled the archive of touch; through the use of this physical object I could interact with my grandmother's absent body. By wearing the dress I could carry her body, wearing the dress on my body I could still touch her. The dress itself existed between the void of absence and presence – the object became a liminal site between these realms. The dress is thus an *object* that I can wear and carry, handed down through generations. But it is also a *place* within which I can stand, and locate myself. Within this material, this threadbare something, I can bear to feel the 'nothingness' Gibson speaks of. To deepen this idea, let me turn to Cixous. According to Cixous,

> [e]very exchange is an extraordinary tapestry. It creates one braid, and this braid is one. And we hold onto this cord which is a woven silk on(e), so that we don't lose ourselves; concentrating on our movements we go step-by-step because we are walking upon the void.
>
> (2008: 35)

Keeping my grandmother's clothing is such a metaphoric tapestry of exchange, even as the garment is also physically a literal tapestry of woven exchange, thread over thread, under and across. The object serves as metaphor in various ways. In the wearing of her dress there is an exchange

between the present and the absent body, a method of touching and connecting that is facilitated by the 'woven silk cord'. Earlier,[51] I refer to a letter my grandmother's sister wrote to her where she asks her to regard the physical letter as a lifeline between them. The letter as lifeline fulfils an analogous function to Cixous' tapestries of exchange, where we weave a silk cord in order not to lose ourselves. The silken cord suggests that we attach ourselves to others to avert loss. This connection works both ways – it also protects against the loss of the other. The silk cord facilitates the connection against loss and absence – much like the letter and the house dress do.

I consciously decided to perform the ritual of wearing my grandmother's house dress to her funeral and was intently aware of it within those moments – yet unaware of the connections and repercussions I am writing about now. The 'me' of that time, of those slow steps, taken while wearing my grandmother's dress, is the woman in this archive.

Walking,

Your dress

- on my body

Your ashes

- in my arms

My feet

- from the church carpet

- to the dust around your grave.

[51] See pg 152.

Those steps can be considered to fall within the female family archive because through the dress, through the connection to the 'silk cord', I was able to walk upon the void. Wearing that dress in that moment constituted an alternative expression of the archive within the archive.

I have a photograph a family member took of me while I was wearing my grandmother's dress as I stood by her grave. I had no knowledge of the photograph being taken. Unlike my act of what I argue is a moment of alternative expression of the female archive; this photograph can never represent that moment or the pain and loss of the moment. In "What has Occurred Only Once" (in which she discusses Roland Barthes' and Christian Boltanski's work in relation to death), Marjorie Perloff suggests that "'presence' in this instance, goes hand in hand with death. 'What the photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the photograph mechanically repeats what can never be repeated existentially'" (2006: 31). The moment of my alternative expression by wearing my grandmother's dress to her funeral that is depicted in the photograph occurred within an in-between – meaning that it can never be repeated as this performative act occurred only once. Thus seeing this photograph does not mean one can comprehend those moments of expression.

I was unsure if I wanted to share this photograph, but as it happens, no matter what I decided the photo has been lost and you will not have the opportunity to see it. You cannot see the photographic representation of that event; nor can I, however often I turn, returning again to that place, that event, those steps, that connection. There is no recapturing the original instance. This has troubled me. Made me feverish. And though re-living loss has ignited a fever in me within the process of this project, as a woman within this family I have also devised ways of understanding that relieve the fever, for like Cixous I have come to believe that in some cases "[t]here's nothing more beautiful in this world than what 'itpassesby', and at the same time it's the most searing because it passes by – and it's lost […] an irreplaceable experience […] Of mourning" (2008: 38).

Wearing my grandmother's dress that day was an 'irreplaceable experience of mourning', as irreplaceable to me as it is, in this instance, to the photographer, the camera and the viewer of that photograph. It is as impossible for me to return to that moment and experience as it is for you to see the photograph. To me this lost photograph, an image recounted to you only in words, was (and is) searing because it seeks impossibly to make present what can never be made present and what cannot therefore 'be' present again. (Even the word 'again' is misleading, because the particular form of the presencing, in the moment of being photographed, was for me unconscious.) For you as reader and potential viewer the photograph possibly sears because you are aware of its importance in my narrative, and yet it possibly evokes merely emotional distance in you, even indifference, for perhaps its existence through this narrative is not of consequence to those beyond my female family archive. The photograph is as lost as the expression of mourning it tried to represent – and failed to represent. I argue that through its absence – an intricate state of having existed and now being lost, and anyway being always fated, given the mediation of representation, never to *fix* the form of the represented, the photograph is still able to carry in its shadows of light and dark the irreconcilable desire to capture simultaneously with the inability to realise or retain this desire. This photograph is always wanting: lost, it is of course found wanting, being missing; but even were it suddenly to be discovered in an old box, or an album, and thus made present, it would *still* be found wanting, as a sign of various lacks. In return I think this possible access to that moment, that you as reader are now aware of but cannot have access to, can elicit in you aspects of the frustrations of loss and the subsequent, and inevitable, inability to escape loss.

This lost photograph of me in my grandmother's dress illustrates the meeting of space and object within the surrogate – much like the photograph of my grandmother wearing the black woollen dress at my grandfather's funeral. This photograph is a view onto the very same location, as my grandmother and grandfather shared adjoining plots. Thus the dress

is located, via the photographs, within the same location. There is another location we must also consider, for clothing, being "perishable, it makes a second grave for the loved being" (Barthes, 2000: 64). Through the act of wearing my grandmother's dress I have 'become' her grave; I am now a surrogate of place, a location analogous to both her physical grave and the signification of the lost photograph.

Similarly I also become a surrogate as I am turned into an object via the processes through which "[p]hotography transform[s] subject into object" (Barthes, 2000: 13). In a photograph, my body reflects the light that interacts with the strip of film in the camera and an image, a positive, is created through the negative. A presence is created through light, which in this instance cannot be seen, and thus serves as absence. The absent photograph stands for the absence of both my performance and my experience within this performance. Barthes explains that "'myself' never coincides with my image; for it is the image which is heavy, motionless, stubborn [...] and 'myself' which is light, divided, dispersed" (2000: 12). I am not in this piece of paper that is the photograph; the paper carries my image, as I carry my grandmother's dress on my body within the photograph. Because the photograph is heavy with time passed, and past times, in effect motionless, it represents that which is photographed, the divided and dispersed self, in this case myself wearing my grandmother's dress. The missing photograph also becomes a text attesting to the unrepresentable experience, further emphasised through this particular photograph's stubborn absence.

Returning to the act of wearing my grandmother's dress I suggest that the act signifies that something has transpired between bodies and beings; it is an act on/in a void of the in-between. Rather than being a medium through which to create a representation, the cloth serves as a vehicle through which some sort of connection is facilitated. In keeping this dress in our/my archive, the cloth serves as an instrument that, in its very existence, claims to represent my grandmother. Yet the action of wearing the dress within these circumstances does not serve as an end in itself; here the cloth serves

as a threshold where absence and presence aim to touch. This connection, similar to that between light and the silver in negatives, does not 'exist' *per se.* Rather; it becomes, in the in-between, a non-site that cannot be located. Here, something is mediated through the dress, not within or onto the dress, and the act of wearing my grandmother's dress to her funeral becomes a moment of expression within the alternative archival realm. In fact, the *moment* is a *movement* outside the arenas of language and theory and image, even though my attempts to bring the moment to being, to address this dress in the dissertation, necessitate my working through language, theory and image.

The Night Dress

The third dress is a white, summer night dress with lace and small red roses around the collar. At the back of the dress, on the inside of the collar, my grandmother's initials – V.J. – are stitched in pink thread, a domesticated female form of writing.

Foucault refers to Magritte arguing that: "'Sometimes the name of an object takes the place of an image. A word can take the place of an object in reality. An image can take the place of a word [...]. In a painting words are of the same cloth as images'" (1998: 198). Foucault continues to say that Magritte,

> allows the old space of representation to rule, but only at the surface, no more than a polished stone, bearing words and shapes: beneath nothing. It is a gravestone; the incisions that drew figures and those that marked letters communicate only by void, the non-place hidden beneath marble solidity.
>
> (1998: 198)

The core function of the surrogate is to 'take the place' of some other event/person/relationship/place/object. (Here, of necessity, the slash does slantwise work, facilitating variable forms of both separating and joining.)

While more abstracted mnemonic signals may come into play, summoning links that set up surrogacy, often we create these surrogates tactilely, through our interactions with their surfaces: paper, textile, stone...Such surfaces are developed, embroidered, inscribed. They work on us to embody relation and we, reciprocally, work on them to strengthen this hold. The links may also replicate through the imaginative, associative powers of metaphor, creating rich analogies of sur-surrogacies that, as suggested by the prefix 'sur', cluster over and above, in addition to, the initial, immediate surrogate. For example, the dress becomes similar to the gravestone when one considers the initials recorded on the inner neckline of the night gown, these aspects are expressed in section a, l, s, v (pp. 125-127), in the accompanying book. (Note that the photograph of the initials is, however, of the initials on one of my grandmother's blouses and not the night gown, this choice was made purely for aesthetic reasons). These initials, like my grandmother's name on the grave and my image on the lost photograph taken at her grave, are interlinked forms of inscription. On the night gown the letters become trace objects signifying a person, and the object of the dress becomes an image of the word, while the reading of the letters turns the dress as object into a text, textile thus becoming language.

The object of the night gown also leads me to a photograph that can be read like a text. Let me momentarily backtrack. I find the night gown between a stack of others, and something about it is familiar to me, though in a different context. I remember (an eidetic impression on my imagination?) that my mother wore a very similar nightie in a photograph taken of her in the hospital after she gave birth to me. I riffle through the stacks of photographs I have collected from family members, and liberated from my mother's albums. I find that it is the same night dress. I realize that the item had first belonged to my mother and was subsequently given to my grandmother. I come to appreciate, again in this instance, that belonging is a layered legacy; never singular and not necessarily following predictable lineages or chronologies. Mother to mother's-mother. Grand/mother to daughter's-daughter. Now the nightie bears my grandmother's initials,

indicating supposed identity and ownership. Because it went with her to the old age home, all her clothing had to be marked with her individual identity so that it would not get lost when they did the residents' collective laundry. She wore the night dress till her last summer.

Tilley argues that "[t]he biographies of particular persons and particular things may be intertwined. The thing is the person and the person is the thing" (2006: 63). This night dress is entangled in the biographies of three people, as it channels the relationship between the bodies of three generations of women: my grandmother, my mother and me.

My grandmother's initials on her night dress (or, more exactly, on my mother's dress which then became my grandmother's dress) means that her night dress can be read as a text in a very literal way. The initials situate the garment as being able to be read through the lettered marks of language, partly a linguistic creation, more evidently than as an object of cloth. Analogously, in the photograph of my mother wearing the night dress at my birth the object, to some extent, becomes an image, becomes an object within an image. By this standard it could be said to materialise more as image than as the material of cloth or clothing. The dress is arrayed beyond its empirical presence via the representational remove of image.

My mother wore this nightie the day she gave birth to me; she'd bought it specifically for this memorable occasion of gendered public intimacy. In a certain sense I am the first absence the dress speaks of as I am no longer in her body when she wears it. The dress marks my birth which is essentially also a 'loss' to the mother as the child is suddenly absent from her body. Yet at the same time the night dress indicates the very beginning of my presence, my existence in the world. I imagine that it is because of this special meaning the piece of clothing carries that my mother kept it.

I recollect her wearing it.

I can see her body in it,

her neck;

her hair;

resting

on the collar.

I have chosen to tell a story of cloth by looking at these three dresses that belonged to my grandmother – yet the story of one object seems always to be intricately interrelated with other objects and stories. It connects to other people and events, and through this to other 'modes of being' and communicating. This is particularly evident in the way this object of cloth, by extension, operates in the mode of both image and text. The photograph has come to play an important role within all three areas of focus. These stories are made up of textiles, paper and skin – recollections and connections of feeling and seeing, of things shared between lips and ears and eyes and hands and hearts.

In "Paralysis" Susan Ardill writes poignantly of the loss of her mother: "Losing her from my external life meant I could turn my attention inwards and see how insistently she is present in my psyche [...] It's as though I am carrying her in my body, just as she did for me once" (1994: 89). I extrapolate, and suggest that we carry each other with and on our bodies in a series of mysterious interactions that move beyond the connection between mother and child, and extend into legacies of female relation. The body that carried my mother's mother, for example, becomes part of the threads of the force that binds us, and the surrogate night dress is the woven bond that connects our physical bodies while connecting us across the void.[52] Notably, the passage of this physical dress object between three generations of women describes aspects of loss that do not directly relate to actual death. In "Our Possessions, our Selves: Domains of Self-Worth and the Possession-Self Link" it is argued that "possessions may be used to construct one's self and thus become a symbolic manifestation of who one is

[52] Cixous, H. 2008: 35.

[…] the loss of [such] an identity marker is a symbolic form of death of self" (Ferraro, Escalas & Betterman, 2010; 169). We aim to retain the person we have lost through the creation of surrogates, but we also create surrogates for the lost/younger aspects of both the loved one and the self. Throughout life we mourn the loss of earlier selves that are no more.

While the night dress is related to all three generations, it was handed across the generations in a non-chronological, non-linear fashion, in the entangled process being located in contexts of both birth and death, unsettling the assumptions of neat teleology that genealogy implies. Alice Blockhurst speculates in her article "From Life Writing to Thing Writing" about dis/order and amorphousness in François Bon's *Autobiographe des objets*. She refers to the text's "scattered chronology" adding that the work is "propelled by sensory association rather than a priori classification, of generative amorphousness rather than strict anchorage" (2015: 428). My own dissertation (specifically this chapter) concentrates on the sensory relationships between people, objects and events and also uses these relationships in their capacities as metaphor and medium. Thus the text, like the archive and its narrative, is inclined towards structures of the random and the haphazard. This is the structure of *feeling* I wish to create, in keeping with the affects which inform my female family archive. However amorphous this may sometimes seem, a reader needs to bear in mind that as artist and writer I have made a conscious choice that my text should reflect and imitate such irregular attributes in order to facilitate opportunities for alternative modes of expression. The female archive is a space of the in-between as it is located at the limen of so many contradictions. This cannot be an orderly, symmetrical place; the balance is always deranged and the movement between generations never linear. These characteristics are clearly displayed in the female family members' creation of, and interaction with, surrogates, which includes my creation of this research text as surrogate.

Simpson argues that when it comes to death and mourning "we respond as infants respond, crying, pining, searching for the one who is gone […] and

seeking comfort in physical contact and being safely wrapped (swaddled?) in comforting cloth" (2014: 260). Through our acts of memory and mourning – whether it is for the physical death and absence of the person or the mourning for a specific 'self' or event that has been lost – we move psychically between birth and death. Our thoughts and feelings move between inside and outside, between the loss of the mother that serves as our first conception of self and the loss of the beloved's body.

As material object, the night dress is located between life and death. After it was used by my mother in the maternity hospital, and then kept to mark my birth, it was given to my grandmother who wore it till the end of her life. (Because we, as a family, were never wealthy, clothing was handed down between family members if it was no longer used by the original owner yet still in good condition.) The dress, through its simultaneous connection to birth and death, illustrates how the surrogate is always in a state of in-between. After my grandmother's death the silk cord passes on to me, and though I do not wear this dress I know that it is connected to me through my mother's body, and my grandmother's body. The night dress commemorates the first day of my life and the last day of my grandmother's.

Listening

Archive of nothing

My female family archive is an archive of thought and touch, of sound and skin. It is not substantially an archive built of stone or books, even though I use words to bring some sense of this archive into being. So this is, some would aver, an archive of nothing. I am writing about nothing. Nothing of importance or consequence beyond the narrow emotional ambit of non-descript women in an unexceptional family. They mean nothing, in the larger scheme of things. All of this, all of the objects, images and words only exist to speak of what is not there, their unimportance, doing so in the prior knowledge that my archival project will fail. And yet… In *Remnants of*

Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive, Agamben writes about the possibility of bearing witness: attempting to listen to testimony is "[l]istening to something absent", but this "did not prove fruitless work for this author" (2002: 13). I am slightly comforted by his ideas, and with great respect and awareness I borrow from the world-historical significance of the Holocaust context to which he refers, hoping to persuade a reader to grant importance to the comparatively insignificant female familial situation of which I write. When I consider my work with his insight I believe that my female family archive may be 'worthy' and necessary. Still: going through the archive-making process only to come (again and again) to the conclusion of the process *not* being "fruitless work", is relentlessly a conclusion by negation that does leave me feeling thwarted and empty, on the precipice of failure. Perhaps the most fruitful work is barren. How then to reach this point (again) - and know it – and still press forward? Forward towards what? In what configuration?

Agamben urges for "certain words to be left behind and others to be understood in a different sense. This is also a way – perhaps the only way – to listen to what is unsaid" (2002: 14). In *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, Agamben refers to Hegel:

> 'this' bit of paper on which I am writing – or rather have written 'this' […] this is impossible, because the sensuous This that is meant cannot be reached by language, which belongs to consciousness […]. In the actual attempt to say it, it would therefore crumble away; those who started to describe it would not be able to complete the description, but would be compelled to leave it to others, who would themselves finally have to admit to speaking about something that *is* not.
>
> (1991: 13)

I therefore suggest that in order to move forward two adjustments, or adaptations, have to be made. Firstly we – I as writer, creator and archivist, and you as reader and fellow thinker – need to leave certain concepts,

approaches and methods behind, while being willing to come to new and other understandings of the entities that have brought us to the conclusions from which we want to move on. Secondly we need to modify and expand our understanding of the possible fruit such departures and adaptations in our work could bring in order to open-up the possibilities of where our work could lead. Let us give ourselves over to these two precepts as a way to deal with this female family archive of mine that is an archive of nothing.

I am keenly aware that this archive is mundane, created by fragments that seem unimportant. But what if this broken collection of apparent inconsequence is all one has? Is the corollary that these domestic areas, affects, and female lives are to be dismissed, unaccounted for? This I cannot agree to. And this is why I use, in the study, methods that aim to bring together the dense world of theory, minor foci and lyrical poetics that might lead us not to irrelevance but towards surprising glimmers of significance.

Enclosing

A Mother's Body

We are confronted with that which is left behind when a beloved dies. Yet before we are faced with object and place as they become surrogates for the lost body, we may be confronted by the very fact of the physical body of the deceased.

Death makes objects of us all. Though we create surrogates that both speak of and connect us to the body of the loved one, when seeing the actual dead body there is no refuting the truth that the body we try so hard to connect with has itself become an object. The dead body exists in another realm. There is living, and living with loss and absence, but when faced with the dead body there is in a sense only the fact of death; this strikes us, seizes us, before we can rush to create mediating substitutes for loss.

With my paternal grandmother, Beatrice, I have no direct connection; she died when my father was seventeen, and not even my mother knew her. Like Anne, my mother's paternal aunt, my father's mother has therefore to many degrees become a closed archive, yet she is nonetheless part of my female archive.

Beatrice is accessible to me only through my father's memories. And thus my father becomes, to some extent, an oblique, secondary part of my female archive in the capacity he serves as a surrogate for his mother. As my father enters into this study of my female archive for a few moments, he carries his mother, a figurative transference reminiscent of when she carried him physically in her body and then on her body. This transference is unsettling as the mother's body, for the son, is an uncanny place, conventionally understood as being the opposite of his own body and at the same time the body in which he found his origin. Her body is always the familiar and the unfamiliar. This strange duality is extreme for the son as the mother's body is not the body of his gender.[53] The child's coming into being, through the mother, is a becoming of difference, a separation that enables independent life, and yet also – inevitably - prefigures death.

In my interview with my father he speaks of his mother's death:

> Pa: …ek was alleen by haar, ek weet sy het gelê in die kis, en ek het aan haar gesig gevat, ek kan onthou hulle het watte, hulle het nie haar tande in gehad nie, maar ek weet daar was so watte in haar mond gewees, wat tussen haar lippe uitgekom het, maar verder het sy gelyk of sy slaap.
>
> Ek: Was sy nie baie koud nie?
>
> P: Ja, Ja. Dit was nou *daai koue* gevoel[54].

[53] Freud, 1919: 15.

[54] Translation: Father: I was alone with her, I know she was lying in the coffin, and I touched her face, I can remember they put cotton wool, they didn't put in her teeth, but I know there was cotton wool in her mouth, that protruded between her lips, beyond this she looked like she was sleeping.
Me: Wasn't she very cold?

(Personal communication, Dec, 2009)

He describes his mother as lying down – as if she had done so by herself, as if her inanimate body was not moved and placed by others. He touches her face and with the contact she becomes unfamiliar and impenetrable, though she appears to be sleeping, the body for a moment, laid down as it is, still appearing in the realm of the familiar: life. But when he touches her she is instantly removed to the realm of final difference: death. He refers to '*that* cold'. In addition, her teeth have been removed, so her face seems no longer the same, no longer her own. More than this, even, he sees the cotton wool protruding between her lips, a material and placement which insistently reminds him that she is now a corpse.

The orifices of my grandmother's dead body were filled with cotton wool by the undertakers that prepared her body, a mortuary practice that inhibits the leachate associated with the onset of decomposition. Barriers are created between what is acceptable, and what is leakily transgressive; the body is closed off, entrances and exits controlled. In a sense, the dead body of Beatrice – lying still as a monument, marshalled and monitored - becomes an embodiment of an archive that can be closed. She is the mother, the home – the place from where my father found his exit from the interior of the body to the exterior of the world. The mother always carries the origin of home within her, and she is also the centre around which the physical family of the domestic home revolves. Now through her death she is closed off and made inaccessible. With nothing more than cotton wool. A form of wadding material is what finally signals her last silence; with cotton wool between her lips, she is marked as silenced forever; the fluffy packing material is the only thing that leaves her lips now – no more words, no more breath. Only surrogate cotton speech bubbles communicate from the silent mouth.

F: Yes, yes. It was *that* cold feeling.

As my father spoke, I listened, and recorded. Later, as I read the words again and write them down, I recall not the meaning of the words, nor the shapes and characters. Neither do I recall his voice. Instead I see my paternal grandmother's face. A clear picture emanates; more than a picture even, an awareness that has the lineations of an embodied experience. I see her face, her mouth… the cotton wool: there is scant light; behind her white face is a warm blackish glow. I see the darkness of her black hair, a bleak trace of blush on her lips transitorily distracting from her mouth gone dark – only the deranged texture of the cotton wool prevails, offensively bright.

Breathing

The Pink Photograph

Because I never knew Beatrice, my paternal grandmother, she has been for me only an image made visible on the flat surface of photographs. Beatrice has always just been a paper archive to me, the paper a surrogate for skin. I would like to discuss this photograph and the various ways in which it can operate as surrogates for my father's mother as well as for the traumatic silences within her life.

In *Camera Lucida* Barthes investigates amateur photography, including his own family photos, concentrating specifically on photographs of his mother. He refers to the "terrible thing there in every photograph: the return of the dead," since with "the photograph we enter into flat death" (2000: 9 & 92). What Barthes refers to here is the inherently uncanny character of the photograph as it is both a realistic representation of its subject yet it is also a paper object. Within the photograph the flux is fixed in an unnatural way as it cannot be 'unfixed' again – it is a state of rigor – a flat death.

The photograph of my father's mother, Beatrice, becomes a return of the dead when we look at it after she has passed away. In this instance the photograph can be considered a doubling of death and thus a surrogate of death itself. Though we are removed from the physical body in these photographs we are still presented with a view of my grandmother's living, embodied person. The photograph shows her sitting in the sun in front of the family home, feet crossed, mending her family's clothes. Behind her we see the low wall that surrounds the porch, on the wall, right behind her head, we can see a bird in a cage. On the porch a closed door that leads into the house is visible, and to the left a window with the curtains drawn. This fifty year old photograph has been turned into a composition of red and pink hues by the passage of time, and my grandmother, wearing a pink dress, now matches and to a certain extent blends in to her surroundings. The photograph is simple, but rich in detail. Yet however full the frame of life details that provides evidence of place and family, the piece of paper offers only a two-dimensional, flat body for us to touch, a person caught in a moment, forever gone, is rendered devoid of inner dimension as she ('it') is turned into the object of the photograph.

To my father, this photograph is a surrogate for his mother. His mother alive, and busy, and part of his familiar world. For me though, it is a surrogate only of my father's testimony of his mother. Yet when I consider Barthes' concept of the photograph as a 'return of the dead' I realise that this is the closest I can come to Beatrice, to any form of interaction with her. Barthes continues:

> It is as if the photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funeral immobility, at the very heart of the moving world: they are glued together, limb by limb [...]. The photograph belongs to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both, the windowpane and the landscape [...].
>
> (2000: 5-6)

Through its own fragile existence as object the photograph also carries its own death. Because the photograph is perishable it becomes a body that in itself asserts inevitable demise. The photograph offers a body of paper that you can touch but touch also includes the ability to rip apart and destroy - much like we are able to destroy the physical bodies of our loved ones. In *Precarious Life* Butler writes that within the family "one is undone in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel" (2004: 24). It is through the photograph's materiality, and the fragility that this entails, that I find entrance into the silent and traumatic aspects of my paternal grandmother's life.

I agree with Julia Breitbach's argument in her article "The photo-as-thing: Photography and thing theory", that the photograph should be considered as an object *apart* from the content of the image it depicts (2011). The photograph as physical object, and by extension the archive, suffers from a threat of traumatic disappearance. I want to use this inherent vulnerability in the photograph and the resulting threat that looms to explore trauma within my family. Violence is inherent in this female archive; it is the very

drive of this archive because with the passion of preserving comes a power to destroy. Even after the traumas committed within the family, even after death, we remain vulnerable to secondary deaths via our surrogates.

This photograph carries the body while being its own object – it is both windowpane and landscape. It is the windowpane, the frame of the photo that holds its image – a vignette of the landscape. Yet the image as it exists in its sheen on top of the paper is also the window. Though it can be touched, as one can touch the glass in the window, the landscape it shows, like the physical reality beyond the window, cannot be reached. This strange threshold frustrates and teases – because it simultaneously makes possible and barricades. It creates amorousness, a desiring want, and at the same time inhibits this desire through the knowledge of limits. It leaves us wanting.

In *The Pleasure of the Text* Barthes writes about "the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing […] between two edges […] it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance" (1975: 10). The photograph is a similarly strange space that both represents and subsequently becomes intermittent – it is the glimpse that allures in offering but never realises in giving. In the pink photograph of Beatrice we can see the mother's skin between the two edges, the window and the windowpane, the two leaves, of the photograph, the paper holding her body much like clothing does. The image offers but never allows the satisfaction of achievement – we can only ever touch the flat clear barrier of surface gloss. Consider as example *My Lovely Day*, a short video by Penny Siopis, originated for the 1997 Johannesburg Biennale. The "video comprises reconstituted sequences from home movies filmed by the artist's mother. The images are superimposed with subtitles that tell a life story through the eyes of the artist's grandmother": Siopis explained that "the materiality of the medium held interest for her over and above its function as a vehicle for the work; it was also part of its meaning". And she said: "The dust spots and markings are all part of realizing it's a construction. There is a sense that it registers something niggling below the surface that cannot

get captured in an image" (Gurney, 2003). In the artist's book I employ techniques similar to those of Siopis' by using the materiality of the photographs to explore the layering of meaning and time.

Barthes' concept of a 'flash' operates in the photograph in many ways. A flash of light is what creates the photograph; an instant of time that renders the image as the subject matter, itself essentially a brief moment, or flash, that would otherwise change quickly. Such brevity is a reminder that one cannot adequately discuss photography if one does not discuss time. Acts of surrogacy, particularly the act of photography, create a strange and layered relationship to and with time. In *My Lovely Day* Penny Siopis refers to Freud's concept of "trans-generational haunting" which includes certain forms of remembrance of family secrets hidden in shame. Siopis, however, argues that in her work with her own family archive what is most haunting is the "way time itself is disturbed in the narrative" (2005: 94). I agree with Siopis that the archive, like narrative, through its content and its participants, traumatizes time with the unnatural states of presence and representation it creates and designates. Siopis continues, asserting that the text "ruptures the sense of linear time because the grandmother occasionally speaks as if she were dead" (Gurney, 2003).

In my artist's book I draw attention to the photograph as a physical object by including, folds, dust spots, stains and discolouring (section a, d, i, b, m, s, pp. 86-99). I also include a photograph where my grandmother deliberately scratched out her face, because she disliked the way she looked (section e, r, w, pp. 129-137). In addition, I sometimes put the writing that is originally on the back of the photograph, on the front (section l, s, w pp. 54-61), and also move the stamp from the developing process from the back of the photograph to the front (section a, b, c, e, w, pp. 138-139). Thus the functional pieces of text become a part of the image. In the section marked 'l, s, w', I also use the back of a photograph to block out aspects of a photograph I discuss later in the thesis but chose not to show. This highlights the physicality and vulnerability of the photograph as a paper object that is handled and passed along, and self-referentially foregrounds

the apparently unmediated quality of 'the photograph' as representation of reality as being, instead, the result of a series of actions, both aesthetic and more practical.

The creation of a photograph in itself reveals an overlayering of time by always being removed from the subject matter it reflects – the photo inevitably holds a visual representation of a different moment in time than the moment in which the photograph itself is held and/or looked at. Time is also integral to the traditional processes of creating a photo, such as exposure, developing, and printing, but by drawing attention to the photograph as object, time, beyond the moment captured in the photograph and the role it plays in the creation of the photograph, is also represented by the photograph as an object and its life after the traditional processes of its creation. By revealing this physicality of the photograph, in a sense the 'lived experience' of the photograph as object, my own artistic and conceptual actions disrupt time, creating a haunting quality much like the words Siopis' grandmother speaks. Through its subject matter and the processes of its creation and through the qualities as an physical object the photograph reveals both the past as well as the present, those various layers that constitute 'moments of now', the moment the photograph was taken, the moment it was developed/printed as well as the various moments/events that made the accumulated marks or folds on the photograph as thing. Yet in a strange way the photograph holds its own future when one view its past as the moment depicted in the image, its subject matter, its present as the moment the photograph was developed and its layered physical patina of fingerprints and scratches, and discoloured pink hues. This is the photograph's future – a 'to come' for the 'have been' of the depicted subject matter. Yet the 'to come' of its future has already also become a past, thus conventional linear time, viewed in terms of past, present and future, is morphed into a confounding simultaneity because there exists at once an *in* and an *on* where the photograph is concerned, a depth which is also a surface, as the image both holds a subject matter and becomes a physical matter in itself.

This particular photograph of my paternal grandmother, Beatrice, with its warm pink and red tints, the chemicals and paper in a reaction discoloured through age, depicting the mother in front of the family home mending her family's clothes, is reconstituted in viewing as a moment of seeming domestic harmony. An ordinary moment of life, from an unexceptional day.

The image does not evidently speak of violence. But the picture is misleading, unable to signal the domestic violence that exists around and within the family space that is depicted. In a sense, photography as an act and the photograph as a subsequent object suffocates time, traumatizes time by holding its breath. All photographs and their depictions are held within the suspended act of holding still and of holding breath. This photograph of my grandmother becomes an opening, almost a mouth, which concurrently contains and suppresses the pressure that radiates from within the scene the photograph captured. Because time is arrested within the photograph the pressure cannot be released – there is no possibility of exhaling. And because there is no exhalation there is no possibility of speech as we conventionally know it. In "Remembrance, The Child I never Was" Annette Kuhn refers to the possible exhalations of trauma in other forms of speech within family photography: "These silences, these repressions, are written into the album […] into actual photographs. All the evidence points in the same direction: something in the family was not right, conflicts were afoot, conflicts a little girl could not really understand, but at some level knew about and wanted to resolve" (2006: 400). With Kuhn's words lingering I would like to refer to an interview with my father:

> P: […] daai gevoel van nie weet waar jy hoort nie die tye wat my ma en pa baklei het… ek onthou eendag wat my ma fiesies geloop het, ek was seker so vier-vyf, en toe sien ek haar, en toe het ek seker 'n kilo deur die veld gehardloop na haar toe[55].

[55] Translation: Father: That feeling of not knowing where you belong at the times when my mother and father fought… I remember one day my mother physically walked away, I was probably about four-five, and I saw her, and I probably ran a kilometer through the veld to her.

(Personal communication, Dec, 2009)

It has been subsequently revealed to me that during this specific fight my grandfather aimed a gun at my grandmother. After the knowledge I have gathered through my research (the knowledge I share with you), the tension inherent in the act and subsequent state of the photograph contributes to the violence that is now, latent for me within the domestic scene the photograph depicts.

In this photograph my grandmother is wearing a pink house dress, sitting in the sun in front of the family home on the farm. She is closed-off to the viewer; her eyes do not meet the photographer's or thus ours. Her face is turned to the women's work in her hands – leaving one unsure if she was even aware of the photograph being taken. Similarly the house is also inaccessible – both the door and the windows are closed, the curtains drawn. She occupies one chair, while there is an empty chair with its back to her and an empty chair at a deserted table. The family is emphatically absent from the photograph. The focus is on the woman, mending, in front of the house. This brings to mind Bourdieu's remark about "the female body, resembling the dark, damp house, full of food, utensils, and children, which is entered and left by the same inevitably soiled opening" (1977: 92). The house behind my grandmother, which serves as a surrogate for her own body, is closed in this photograph. The closed windows and door of the house remind me of the orifices of her dead body closed off with cotton wool. We know there is an inside but it is unreachable. A closed window, like the window of the photograph, is the metaphor of absence – the knowledge or awareness of what is, and will remain unknown. The most expressive element – yet still contained – is the birdcage behind my grandmother's head. At first an object of uncertainty, in that the eye cannot easily distinguish what it is. Then, slowly, the eye and mind process together, bringing the object into being. The cage is simultaneously a beautiful and an ominous framework that implies an enclosure within an outside. The

domesticated bird in its cage is the 'punctum' in this photograph. As Barthes asserts, the "punctum is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole [...] A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (2000: 27)[56]. The cage, in an analogy of the photograph, paradoxically offers a view yet barricades, withholding both entrance and escape at the same time. My grandmother is a caged bird. But because she never, in her life, spoke of these things, and because this photograph does not expressly articulate this violence, in some way the caged bird signifies that which duplicates the inherent violence latent in the visual arrangement.

Looking

Father's Slides

In her book *Touching, the Human Significance of the Skin* Ashley Montagu writes: "Our words and our images are poor imitations of the deep and complicated feelings within us. Unsure of touching as a way of sharing with others, we have allowed our fears and discomforts to limit the rich possibilities for nonverbal communication" (1986: 204). Beyond the various surrogate states of the photograph I have already discussed, there is another class of photograph that warrants discussion: the photographic image as surrogate that is not 'about' what it is 'about'.

This class of photograph is the intentionally created image that serves as a substitute for something beyond its subject, for the ephemeral and abstract in nature. In the photographs I will now discuss, the photograph is not just a substitute for the inability to capture aspects of such nature within modes of representation, such as photography, but also for the inability to experience such relationships and interactions in life. In this case, these photographs are a substitute not for sense, or experience, or the body, but for the very absence of those things. The photographs are substitutes not for touch but for the lack of touch, meaning that this female archive does not

[56] It is worth noting that Barthes' concept of the punctum is, for him, found in a photograph of his mother as a child – the photograph is never shown and is only known as the 'Winter Garden Photograph' (2000 :67-73).

only facilitate and archive the act of touching through the surrogates that reside in it, but also the absence of touch and the ability to touch. The female archive thus becomes a surrogate for lack and longing as well as for the unrequited hope of what is longed for.

I argue, referring to Hirsch, that photographs in this specific surrogate state are "attempting to find, to touch, and to name what exactly lies outside the frame" (1997: 208). But more than this such photographs attempt, in some sense, to capture that which does not exist beyond the frame either – capturing absence that has never been present – capturing nothingness. To look at the ways in which these objects are employed I focus once again on the notion that the female archive is in so many instances both an archive of nothing but also for nothing.

When I look at a collection of photographs[57] my maternal grandfather took of his three daughters the photo as surrogate becomes a paper substitute for the embodied interaction between family members. Yet this does not deal with loss of the loved one in death; it figures the loss of the *potential* interaction with those individuals while they were still alive. This is, in the present family relationships, the loss of something you never actually 'had'. In this case it is also the act of taking the photograph, rather than the photo itself, that is the predominant surrogate for the absence of the physical expression of love between a father and his daughters. This absence was created because of the secret trauma my grandmother's father committed towards her. This original trauma now finds warped expression as it reverberates onto a second generation through the creation of invisible and intangible physical barriers that prohibit even loving, innocent father-daughter physical relationships. I use this concept of warped expression by engaging with these images in a variety of ways in the accompanying book. Distance and a clear awareness of separation, as well as aspects of distortion, are manifested by rephotographing the slides through the hand-held viewer so that the reflection of the light through the image on the

[57] Various interpretations of these photos can be seen on pages 121, 123, 132, 134, 136, & 148-171 in the accompanying book.

interior of the viewer is visible. I also painted the images, in certain cases projecting the image and painting 'the light' itself, only to suggest the figures. These paintings are also repeated in order to create patterns that attest to generational traumas and inheritance.

Why is it that even as I write the words 'physical expression of love between a father and his daughters' the idea makes me uncomfortable? In the contemporary context of abuse narratives and domestic trauma, the phrasing is irrevocably shadowed by assumptions of the wrong, the perverted. And yet in the present instance, it was not; not this father with these daughters. But the uncanny and constant presence of trauma within my family stains phrases such as this one, making it difficult to imagine the relationship between father and daughters as innocently loving. In creating the female family archive, I want to remove the blot on these words within the father-daughter relationships in one generation, and at the same time draw your attention to the various repercussions and impacts of familial trauma in the father-daughter relationship in the previous generation. The impact of the trauma that was committed against my grandmother by her father, a trauma of which the details are barely known and even then only decades subsequently, impacted the next generation of father-daughter relationships as my grandmother never allowed any substantive physical contact between her husband and daughters. (I do not know the specifics. These have remained unsaid, a family circumvention, a taboo. I have no option, then, but to leave this implied trauma as it is, unsure what to make of it: this 'it' that remains implied, but nervously, respectably, unspecified.)

The photos my grandfather took of all three of his daughters have come to represent to me something other than the women or girls captured in them. In these photographs I see my grandfather, despite the fact that he is always absent in the photograph. When I look at these images I see the man behind the lens more than the female photographic subjects on whom the camera is focused. For me these images, though not of him, are the most intimate connection I can have with my grandfather as I do not really have many memories of him. These photographs as surrogates imply to me not only

what he saw, and how he saw, but what he decided to photograph. This way of looking at his daughters is mediated through the photographs he took of them. This is how he loved them: through the camera as proxy.

The imprint of the violence in my maternal grandmother's relationship with her own father[58] reverberates onto the relationship she disallows between her husband and her daughters. I encounter these reverberations within the visual-emotional ambit of my grandfather's photographs. My grandmother, as shaped by her own lived history, created not only a cleft between her husband and her daughters but a rift between herself and her daughters as well. For though there was love in their house, shown through acts of caretaking and mothering such as mending their clothes and warming the clothing by the coal stove before the children got dressed, there was never the physical expression of love, the tactile interaction between body and body.

In *Family Frames* Hirsch describes Daniel Boudinet's photograph "Polaroid", the frontispiece of *Camera Lucida*, as a figure serving "for the impenetrable façade of the domestic picture" (1997: 2). Boudinet's photograph creates the surrogate presence of what cannot be made present within the domestic scene. The image depicts a bedroom through the suggestive yet elusive folds of a bed and a drawn curtain. The empty bed shown in the photograph implies an absent presence but the curtain frustrates because it manifests the knowledge of another view beyond the window, a scene that lures but cannot be accessed. The image keeps one forever aware of an inaccessible presence – a revealing that it conceals.

Similarly, the photographs my grandfather took of his daughters and wife outside in the garden and around the house: though these pictures are populated and not as hauntingly vacant as the scene in Boudinet's image, they also imply that which cannot be revealed. The domestic pictures are as opaque as Boudinet's drawn curtain that simultaneously, and frustratingly, reveals the 'other layer' that it will always conceal.

[58] As discussed in the sections 'V' in my first chapter.

The women in my grandfather's photos are positioned and displayed for the taking of the photograph, usually amongst flowers, in front of windows and fences, my mother among her dolls. And though these settings hint at the enclosed female domestic life they do not disclose the domestic interior. In this case, Boudinet's photograph of the bed and curtain perhaps reveals more of the lived interior of private lives than these images in my female family archive where the women are pictured outside the home in front of closed windows that suggest the interior of the house and the possibility of a view that the photograph refuses to offer.[59]

Even though the women are photographed outside the home there remains a strong presence of confinement when one considers the garden fences present in some of the images. In "The Formal and the Foreign", a paper which considers the meaning of garden fences and enclosure in the fiction of Sarah Orne Jewett, Kaye Wierzbicki states that in Jewett's narratives those who get fenced in are women, with fences serving as protective enclosures (2014: 57-58). In my grandfather's photographs the women are similarly fenced, and although the fences are protective in nature the barriers also serve as a sign of restriction, restraint. In this case I assert that this awareness of restriction can indicate both the women being confined to the home and domestic sphere as well as a metaphor for the restrictions in the relationships between my grandfather and his daughters. These visual elements present in my grandfather's photographs serve in similar ways to the curtain in Boudinet's photograph by alluding to the complex, invisible and unknown strata of relationships that lie underneath these images.

[59] This can also be seen in 'the pink photograph' of Beatrice that I have already discussed.

Bird Watching

Framed figures

girls

in paper cages

perched
on
garden
benches

in front of

windows, fences, and flowers.

According to family anecdote, photography was a hobby my grandfather loved, so he is likely to have considered the light and structure of his compositions, choosing where the females of the household should pose, and to some extent how they should pose. With this knowledge I continue to

read the visual cues in my grandfather's photographs: none of the women in his photographs liked being photographed and would not have been passive subjects. In the images, they all appear awkward and very self-conscious; their body-language shows them keeping themselves even more still than the moment of being photographed demands, and the resulting images suggest a pre-existing rigor that has nothing to do with the process of being fixed by the photograph. The rigidity contained within the photographed figures of my grandfather's daughters in a sense also serves as reflection of, and to an extent a surrogate for, the young women's relationship with their father.

The only time his gaze seems to be returned in a way that might have brought him possibly closer to the subject is in the photographs he took of my mother, his youngest daughter, when she was still a girl.[60] I chose to capture and recapture these slides in a variety of ways; in section 'e, r, w', for example, the images are reinterpreted through painting and the subsequent creation of a pattern with these painted renderings (pp. 129-137). My rerenderings of these images speak to the layers of removal and the distance in the father's relationship with his daughters. The painted recreations that are turned into patterns serve as visual expressions of the various and complex ways familial relationships can become reinterpreted and remanifested – much like my grandmother's trauma with her father manifests in her husband's relationship with his own daughters. While she is fixed by the photographs, there is no inherent socio-embodied stiffness in these images. The girl is still becoming herself; her self, as expressed and performed through her body language in these images, has not yet been moulded into the stifling respectability her mother sought to impose on the daughters. In the likenesses some vitalising animation seems still to flow in the photographic subject. But across the years of being photographed, this vitality wanes and this can be seen in the images of her as a teenager in the artist's book (pp. 160-163). As she grows older the socio-cultural frame fixes

[60] These images of my mother can be seen in the accompanying book (p. 132) where it is reinterpreted and cropped in a painting and where I have projected these images onto myself (pp. 152-155; 164-167).

her, and the 'proper' female rigidity starts to set in. This is caught in the photographs.

As I now view the women depicted in these photographs I can also see how familial trauma has seeped through generations, through time itself. Bodies that were not directly touched by my grandmother's trauma are rendered traumatically immobile. The women are framed, confined, not only by the photographs taken of them by the man who is father or husband, but even further: their very postures, demeanours, bodies are delimited by the inherited parameters of our familial trauma that sees their mother attempt to prevent them from coming too close to/becoming too close to, their father. However loving he might have wished to be, however much he loved his daughters, with no impropriety, his wife is so shadowed by her experiences with her own father that she actively seeks to pre-empt; that which shows no signs of happening in the present, *but* which, to her, has already happened in the past.[61]

My grandfather's photographs of his daughters, signifying the thwarted hope of interaction in his act of photographing, are surrogates for an absent relationship. These photographs are a lament for what has never been, and thus what is perversely always lost – the archive of things that is never 'about' what it seems to be about. These are surrogates of the surrogate, attempted touch in order to aim at touching what we know can never be. Such doubled surrogacy entails looking at what is there with the hope of looking through, beyond, behind this presence in order to reach another, impossible presencing. While these lamenting surrogates are objects and acts of mourning, they are also freighted, I argue, with traces of fragile hope: the hope of looking behind the curtain in the photograph. My female family archive, like this text (this research project), is always reaching towards what it cannot ever archive. This archive is always on a fool's errand yet this (tautological) errand remains, for it is a desired agency and object that the fever and passion of the archive does not allow us to abandon. In relation to

[61] The paintings of projected slides (pp. 134, 136) in the accompanying book concentrate on capturing these demeanours and postures.

my own family archive I remain a fool on an errant errand because of the fever the familial trauma I am infected with induces, but also because of the passion that reverberates from love.

Let me return to my grandfather's images, for I have been somewhat oblique here, even disingenuous: though my grandfather took photographs as well, the 'photographs' I refer to are actually slides. My grandfather often used slide film. And I mention this because this mode of representation differs from the flat, two-dimensional effect and characteristic of photography in that the slides demand a different technology of viewing, one that intimately involves light, the touch of hands, and a close viewing via the eye. Slide photography results in a film strip that, once developed, is made up of positive images (instead of the negatives of the images when one uses standard film), these transparent images are then placed into 4cm x 4cm, square plastic or paper mounts. For the PhD project, I view these slides with a small handheld viewer. You slip the slide into a tiny track at the front of the device next to a small 'window'. You then hold the small box up to the light, placing the little round viewfinder in front of your eye. The light brightens the once-dark image from behind, and so illuminated, the slide resolves into a tiny scene. Section 'f, l, p, u' (pp. 119-123) of my artist's book relates to aspects of looking and colour in photography with the use of graphics from a photographic manual, as well as a photograph taken through the viewfinder I use to look at the slides. This photograph is edged and framed by the interior of the plastic box of the handheld viewer in order to highlight the act of viewing, the distance within this act, as well as to perpetuate a sense of confinement much like the fences in the images themselves. I also employ the image of birds as the clues of a crossword puzzle that include phrases such as 'flightless bird', 'posed for a portrait' and 'wired enclosure'[62] to connect with the above poem, birdwatching, that is visually laid out to represent a birdcage.

[62] This also connects with the birdcage behind Beatrice in the pink photograph; the bird thus serves as a symbol throughout - also seen in the image of a bird included from a child's colouring book on page 61 of the artist's book.

Viewing the images in this way is reminiscent of the act of looking through a camera. The light creates a suggestion of movement behind the image – this triggers a felt awareness of something that exists behind or beyond the image. This act of viewing is my act of surrogacy, since I am aware of the photographer, my grandfather, and the act of photography, when I look at these images against the light. In my undergrad and postgrad studies, as a student engaged in visual art, I chose photography as my medium. I also chose to work almost exclusively with a very simple, old Pentax camera – similar to the one my grandfather used, also quite often electing to work with slides and slide-film. Through photography as medium and the camera as object I felt a connection to my grandfather. I think I used photography (the medium, the objects involved and the act of photographing), as a surrogate to connect with my grandfather because he died when I was five years old and I can remember very little of him. I set up a conscious visual-conceptual conversation with the photographic methods and materials that characterise my female family archive in order to interact with, and subsequently perpetuate, the female archive. The connection I created with my grandfather was also for me a connection with my mother as her father was such an important figure in her life.

In my work as visual-verbal creative artist I have used several of my grandfather's photographs, both in the present artist's book as well as in my previous art exhibitions. It is the seeing and viewing of my grandfather's images that triggered my creation of surrogates as manifested in my art. In the last series of the accompanying book, section 'a, d, I, l, m, r, s, t', I projected my grandfather's slides of my mother and grandmother onto my face and shoulders and rephotographed these projections (pp. 147-171). In these images I aim to visually express the complex layers and strata within the acts of surrogacy, specifically then the surrogacy between these three generations. The layering of image as a slide-object projected as light onto a physical body and backdrop to create another image once more speaks to the complex relationships between object, body, space and the ephemeral. Through such laminous relationships the art I create, in all areas of my

practice and specifically within the accompanying artist's text, carries a variety of palimpsest possibilities: it is not solely an expression of my personal artistic style or intention, but always-already a body of work cathected to my female family archive.

Longing

Father's

I propose that we all suffer from the urge to reach, touch and see what is for so many complicated reasons beyond us. This same urge propels the creation of the archive. The surrogate is not merely a substitute for the loved one, or the touch of the loved one, it becomes a manifestation of the very urge to touch. My mother and her two older sisters also created such surrogates in relation to their father, and like my grandfather's photographs these are figures not only of loss but of longing. Relevant here is what Bennett asserts about artist Doris Salcedo's work:

> [It] unfolds through the gradual negotiation of metamorphosis. The world made strange by death – the alienating and disorientating experience of loss – is thereby slowly revealed to viewers in their own encounters with the objects in transformation, objects that become affective triggers only at particular junctures in a perceptual process.
>
> (2005: 67)

Though my mother and her sisters are not rendering objects into works of art, as Salcedo and I do, they are mediating forms of metamorphosis as they create surrogates. In essence the surrogates are mutated, through conversions of meaning and utility, in order to deal with the changes rendered by loss. Thus the morphing of objects is generated through the absence of the loved one, and subsequently further produced by the tantalising traces of the absent presence of the person that remains in

things they have left behind after death. Through this process the family/iar object becomes unfamily/iar through death, and is affectively amended into something that becomes a new familiar that *includes* death. The object changes in its post-death context. In the next section of this study, I will continue by investigating the ways in which my mother and her sisters created and morphed such objects through various individual approaches and actions, or through the choices of in-action that become another state of stasis and rigor much like their figures in their father's slides.

The Middle Sister

I was told my mother's middle sister kissed her father for the first and last time on the forehead after he died. Though she was with him before he died she waited to kiss him after he died – another moment of stasis through her choice not to perform this action synchronously with the desire to act i.e. before he died. The body of her father after his death becomes an object removed from 'her father', in effect a surrogate, and possibly easier to approach than was the living man. This becomes a gesture of surrogacy which mediates the act of touch, not so much between father and daughter but via the daughter expressing a form of her agency onto a surrogate for her father. It is a physical reach and touch of 'what is no more' because of what could never be. She chooses to touch the object rather than the father.

The Youngest Sister

After he died, my mother kept, and wore, her father's overcoat. For someone who was never physically close to her father it may seem strange for her to have started wearing his overcoat after his death, even more so because it is a man's overcoat, so oversized that she had to roll up the sleeves.

Certainly the sight of my mother wearing the coat was disconcerting or perplexing or intriguing enough that, as a child, it made a great impact on me. I watched her as she wore this garment on winter mornings when she

took me to school. How large it seemed. How it enveloped her, and yet appeared a separate skin. I remember seeing the material on the inside of the coat in the rolled-up cuffs. Intimate and soft. My awareness became reverential, as if I intuited the closeness between the lining and my mother's skin as taking the absent temperature of her missing father. This tactile yet indirect relationship of bodies and object attracted me. I was drawn in by the coat; drawn into its mysteriously subjective quality as an intimate object.

Even as a child I was mindful of her choice to inhabit her father's clothing, and I was aware of the fact that her action entailed a curious kind of interaction with my dead grandfather. He felt present when she wore the coat. I knew the person was my mother, but the piece of clothing implied the presence of my grandfather and, even more powerfully, it was the act of wearing the coat that embodied a communion created between the present and the absent body. I did not then know what I know now. At this moment. But it registered nonetheless. I felt what I saw – it was not unfamiliar. Was it this imprint/impulse that extended, years later, when I decided to wear my grandmother's dress to her funeral?

The Eldest Sister

After my grandfather's death all his little blue plastic boxes of slides, with their clear lids, were divided between his three daughters. When I asked his eldest daughter what items she chose to keep of him and still cherishes, she says that she keeps a box of his slides. She does not however look at the slides – she keeps it as a closed object:

> …ek het 'n houertjie van sy skyfies wat ek ook nooit na wou kyk nie. Dit lê daar in my kamer - dis te hartseer om te kyk want dis deel van hom. Dis nou

> wat, agtien, twintig jaar oud… [dis] op 'n ander manier soos Oupa se pyp en sy skyfies, dis ook 'n manier van weg-hou omdat ek bang is vir seerkry.[63]
>
> (Personal communication, Dec, 2009)

The actions of my grandfather's eldest daughter are a strange appropriation, a re-interpretation and designation of his attempt to connect with his daughters through his camera, when he was taking 'photographs' (meaning 'slides'). If I return to Barthes' idea of the punctum as located within the photograph, in this context I argue that the punctum itself is reassigned and relocated by my aunt's creation of this surrogate. The punctum is moved from within the image to the physical object of the image/slide. It is the image as object and not its content that wounds. These objects have the ability to sting because they were created by her father – hence viewing these slide images is for her an interaction with the one who created the images as objects; she is less concerned with the subject matter depicted. And because of her relocation of the wounding of the punctum from the image itself to the slide as object (effectively a form of affective sliding) she cannot look at or even interact with the slides. Therefore she keeps the slides safe within their boxes, keeping them but not looking at them; keeping them but never holding them. Retaining the slides, always boxed, enables her to contain the powerful affects that otherwise threaten to overwhelm her. She keeps the slides in the interior of the interior archive; she buries them.

One can observe her inversion of the concept of object not as material thing by how my aunt immobilises the image, putting the image itself in a state of rigor, so that its meaning as object is almost completely obliterated. The

[63] Translation: P**: …I have a container of his slides that I've never wanted to look at. It's there in my bedroom, it's too sad to look at because it is a part of him. It's now eighteen, twenty years… It's in a different way like Grandpa's pipes and slides, [it's] a way of keeping it away as well because I am afraid of getting hurt.

slides, and their meaning and ability to mean, are confined – indeed closed-off. The object becomes deliberately a form of 'closed archive'. The creation of this inaccessibility, shutting down on the possibilities and demands of further interaction, becomes an objective correlative that can be viewed as a re-interpretation of the physical inaccessibility of any relationship with her father. My grandmother sequestered her husband and her daughters from each other in the same way that my aunt now encloses these slides in their case.

Sheltering

"Voorskoot"

Voorskoot is the Afrikaans word for an apron.

Yet if one tears the word in two – voor / skoot – two separate Afrikaans words are created:

Voor meaning front or in-front-of. *Skoot* refers, amongst other things, to the lap or bosom, and the shot from a gun.

The *voorskoot*/the apron, was a female garment worn inside the home, mostly in the kitchen. It literally means the piece of material worn in-front-of the lap or bosom, going around the waist and fastened in the back with a bow or knot. (An apron may be short, covering only the lap, or long, covering breast to knees.)

A v*oorskoot* serves a simple purpose: to protect the woman's clothes from stains as she works in the home and prepares food. If a *voorskoot* is a functional textile worn protectively over the woman's lap or breast, this very site is rich in association, for it is the same lap in which we all have our origin, the same breast at which (usually) we are suckled and nurtured as infants. The garment is paradoxical in that it both marks out and yet also covers up and thus disguises the uncanny spaces of the mother's mothering

body, sites at once pragmatic and sensually mysterious. The apron as material object becomes a veil that obscures the female lap/skoot as well as that which protects it. (As indicated above, the word *skoot* carries this same uncanny duality, referring both to the homely female bosom as well as to the violence of a gunshot.) The apron as an object is a mediating threshold between the female body and its worlds. (Here, too, these environments are literal, but also discursive, constructed in language.) The apron is both what protects and what hides – through the dualities at the core of this garment it represents the split between the female body within the home and the inherent threat of violence that so often accompanies the familial domestic space, for women.

Raising

Monuments

In the window seat of my grandmother's apartment I found a neatly washed,

pressed and folded stack of aprons. These were in many ways the most

familiar objects to me. The way the aprons were kept struck me as recorded

evidence of an entire life of a wife and a mother, an entire life of a woman in my

family. Her domestic archive. A stack of folded texts similar to pages. This small

stack spoke of my grandmother's hours and days. These aprons were no longer in

use; they were worn through and had been mended again-and-again, yet my

grandmother kept them, rather than throwing them out. This stack was

turned into a private monument of cloth, an intimate materiality that stands

beyond any substitute for monumental stone. The careful pile of cared-for

aprons, hidden within a dark interior, pays silent tribute to this woman's life.

A monument is a paradoxical object, "taken out of history, by history. Yet it stands for history in terms of what it has left behind, as a mnemonic trace

that also separates it from the present [...] [it] includes signs of temporal duration from patina and damage to incompleteness and everyday wear and tear" (Rowlands & Tilley, 2006: 500-501). In ways similar to the female archive working in oblique relation to more conventional notions of archive, the stack of aprons I discovered in my grandmother's cupboard can be viewed as a monument of sorts. Let me elaborate. By taking these objects out of their history of use as functional items and relocating them to a place for safe-keeping my grandmother initiates a disruptive transaction between different concepts and arenas of history. Holding onto the apron objects even after they have fulfilled their original purpose places them in a role that serves a less utilitarian purpose: they become prompts of remembrance. This stack of aprons has been taken out of its original daily domestic life context, and this once ordinary present has become a history. The aprons' non-use and retention re-locates the domestic objects in a mnemonic mode of existence that serves the notion of history differently than previously. Yet, paradoxically, it is the functional, worn history of these objects that enables the metamorphic movement from the history of the everyday experience into an object that functions within the female family archive. I encountered this stack of textiles as a small altar, both the object and its meaning acquiring something of the formalised, fixed associations evocative of the monument: firmly in place, attesting to something of consequence; no longer swaying in front of a woman's busy domestic body. This then entails that the aprons now *mean* differently than they did originally; the aprons, through their worn erosion, formed into a cloth tower, now attest to the life of my grandmother at some remove, an impressive but also rather static, hidden signifier. In section 'a, l, s, v' (pp. 125-127) I hint at such shifts in meaning by using a photograph of my grandmother's stack of aprons, photographed in a way to suggest a more architectural and monumental effect, with a photograph of my grandmother leaning against the headstone of a grave. The photograph does not show the name on the grave; instead I chose to use a photograph of my grandmother's initials marked on a blouse to effect a shift of meaning, moving the words from the public location of the graveyard, a site that suggests traditional posterity, to the marking on the

blouse that serves as a clear example of the minor, intimate workings of the female archive.

A/Mending

Pattern

My grandmother's aprons were mended by her repeatedly, returning the worn item to its function: to be worn and used again. Through the mending she attempted to restore the object to the closest approximation of its original state, so that she could rest assured in using the object in the same ways she always had, certain in the knowledge that it continued also to resemble itself as nearly, coherently and resiliently as possible. Yet the ritual of mending was initiated and performed beyond mere practicalities, its psychic intention being to perpetuate the established rituals of the fabric of the family's domestic life and the role of the woman in this life, without showing the wounds of familiar pattern upon either apron or woman. In a sense, the woman herself serves as a mediating apron, keeping at bay the undesirable signs of troubling stain. Annette Kuhn describes family secrets as haunting our "memory-stories, giving them pattern and shape" (2002: 2). My family's secrets haunt these aprons because through my grandmother's attempts to mend the material wounds of the worn aprons' fabric, so as not to disturb the pattern, she reprises her own patterns of shaping that mutely witness such familial secrets. In her short story "The Yellow Wall-paper" Charlotte Perkins Gilman writes about the presence of a 'sub-pattern' within a pattern, a menacing presence that skulks, much as wounding and secrets lurk in the mending patterns of the women in my family: "This wallpaper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade [...] in the places where it is not faded and where the sun is just so – I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design" (1998: 8-9).

In being situated between body and environment, clothing wears thin. Everyday life eventually renders holes within the material. These holes may be cannily managed, if not quite eliminated, through forms of female labour. The women in my family adhere to patterns, repetitions, and rituals. They have a particular method of mending fabric that aims to recreate the pattern of the worn object by matching the colour and type of thread, copying and continuing the visual design of the material, on the material. When I look at the patterns the women in my family recreate and perpetuate I will endeavour to "follow that pointless pattern to some sort of conclusion" (1998: 8-9). Perkins, however, continues to say that because she knows a little of the principles of design she "know[s] this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of" (1998: 8-9). The patterns the women in my family create are, however, arranged to certain laws of alteration and symmetry that reveal the workings of our female archive and serve as metaphors for how these women cope with aspects of the unsayable and unsaid.

Mending is something all the women in my family do, a theme of repetition and restoration; they do not do fine embroidery needlework, only darning. Yet my mother was not a dutiful, regular mender (perhaps the result of slowly-changing female codes of conduct), meaning that when my grandmother came to visit *she* mended our clothes. Through this tradition, sometimes performed for the women by other women in the family (as in my mother's case), this ritual of pattern creation and perpetuation is enacted, taught and continued even on another's behalf.

In this closely-imitative female labour, they seem endlessly to hold at bay and keep in place, intent not only on frugally 'saving' garments for continued use, but on disturbing neither the configurations of the textile nor their domestic arrangements of living and functioning. And yet the meanings of the mending are not easy to ascertain, the laws of design they adhere to and employ are not clear or straightforward. For instance, you might be inclined to read my grandmother's mending of our clothes as an expression of maternal care towards her daughter. But the mending is perhaps an

ambiguous effort: a labour of love, to be sure, but also a silent rebuke of the daughter, my mother, for her perceived domestic lapses as mother and wife.

In the forms of mending carried out by various generations of women in my family, the holes in the material are mended by spreading the garment over an object with a rounded end – traditionally, a darning egg, but sometimes also a fused light bulb. In this process, the hole is opened up and threads flayed, ready for re-connection, the hole re-made for the second time, this time intentionally, though only in order to be slowly mended by being filled up via the woman's working with her needle on a repeated network of threads, a warp and weft of needling woven with acute care, over wood, or thin glass. In mending, the woman recognises that the wear and tear of everyday life – a recurring collision of body and object - has wounded the object to such a great extent that a gash has been created, and the material cannot merely be drawn together in a suture and stitched up. This would result in a clumsy mend, visually inelegant, but also so knobbed as to be physically uncomfortable for the wearer. So, instead, the material has to be *re-made* precisely by the woman's creating a new series of interwoven thread-stitches. The fabric has to be made-mended in a slow process that uses the wound as the grounding margin for a newly created surface skin. The restoration of the pattern takes over the tending of the wounded hole, overcoming the hole in an incremental intersection of stitched threads through which the hole is mended so as to appear whole.

I find one of my grandmother's sheets and see that it has been altered to a more drastic extent than the aprons. The sheet is covered in a pattern of yellow rose buds, but she has added, for some reason, a section of material to it. When I look more closely at this piece of fabric I see that it is actually just plain white and that she has cut pieces shaped like the rosebuds from some other piece of yellow material and stitched these onto the white background. From a little distance, the pattern appears undisturbed, but as you look more closely you see that the pattern has not merely been repaired, but ingeniously re/created from scratch. These pieces of mending are surrogates, and they become the embodiment of how the women in my

family restore and recreate the familiar patterns not just to mend breaks, but to camouflage and refuse them.

In her novel *For the Mercy of Water* Karen Jayes writes painfully and intricately about a woman stitching the physical wounds on a child's body, injuries inflicted by severe trauma: "I am stitching up the wounds inside her. Her skin there is thin and slippery like the fabric of a dress. When I am finished sewing her [...] I put the needle and the dirty cotton wool and her T-shirt in a pile" (2012: 43). The character's 'mending' of the physical body is also an attempt to repair the trauma and make it both less injurious, and less apparent. In my family a similar craft of dealing with trauma is applied, yet we do not directly mend gaping physical wounds and those practices do not enter our narrative; instead, we communicate and repair our trauma through the surrogates in our archive.

These traditions of pattern creation almost guarantee that the women in my family, like the aprons, appear undisturbed. But if you look closely you can see that we are ever-mended in a processual amendment so as not to ruin the familiar patterns that keep the family, and the women within this family, functioning properly, in keeping with the received proprieties of cultural norms and also the inherited, preferred narratives of family story. We tell ourselves that this, *this,* is what we can tell ourselves. And nothing more. Not *that*.

And this is how our archive is created – by fastening fragile threads to each other; threads that both close wounds and at the same time become wounds because though the mending mends the original wound it also subtly marks out this wound. The action of mending also recreates motions of wounding, piercing and flaying; it thus becomes a secondary wound and wounding, even in the motion of healing and w/holing. I assert that these secondary surrogates of thread that my female ancestors wove into material objects express the wounds of bosom, bed and body in this family.

In my artist's book I address many of the above aspects in section 'e, r, w' (pp. 129-137); fabric patterns that relate to the text are shown such as the

black flower pattern (p. 133), this is the fabric of my grandmother's house dress that I wore to her funeral,[64] I also include the striped pattern of my grandmother's stationary (p. 132). The close-up of my grandmother's mended *voorskoot* is placed next to a close-up of her face in order to suggest the themes of skin and wounding (p. 134). The inclusion of my own minimal painterly reproduction of my grandfather's slides also alludes to my own form of pattern-making. My oil painting of one of my grandfather's photographs of my mother is arranged with a close-up photograph of the worn vinyl tiling on a floor in order to evoke the idea that pattern making also occur in our physical environment (p. 132). The concept of repeated and ritual impact on the objects and space that surround us is also expressed where I chose to place a photograph of a Karoo town (taken to look almost like a painting or possibly a piece of fabric), next to a close-up image of a crack in a teacup with a drop of tea running down it (p. 137). Because the photograph of the tea cup is taken from such a close angle the scale becomes distorted and the object takes on an architectural quality. These elements, as well as playing with aspects such as colour and composition (a method I employ through-out the book), hint at the relationships between body, object and space. I also chose to include graphic aspects, this time from a Needlework Manual, which gives instructions on mending and darning. These functional instructions serve as a reference to, and a play on, the generational instruction of mending that function on much deeper levels within my female family archive, much like the work done with the Needle in the Jayes quote (2012: 43).

[64] Because the book is not a clear or linear illustrative companion to the dissertation the various sections of the book brings together elements of the thesis that are not necessarily directly linked yet remain a part of the same archive.

Weeping

The Kitchen

In *Identity, Genealogy, History* Nikolas Rose argues:

> …it is in the factory as much as the kitchen […] in the office as much as the bedroom, that the modern subject has been required to identify his or her subjectivity. […] And in each of these spaces repertoires of conduct are activated that are not bounded by the enclosure formed by the human skin or carried in a stable form in the interior of an individual: they are rather webs of tension across a space that accord human beings capacities and powers to the extent that they catch them up in hybrid assemblages of knowledge, instruments, vocabularies, systems of judgement and technical artefacts.
>
> (2000: 322)

Rose's discussion reveals both how and why space can operate as surrogates. Space creates and allows for certain 'repertoires of conduct' that become untethered from clear concepts of interiority and exteriority as it allows for aspects of interaction that exist among unclear areas of in-between. This is why space can reveal and display the complex 'web[s] of tension' of human lives - thus becoming a surrogate that operates within the female archive.

Antoinette Burton writes about house and home in women's writing in *Dwelling in the Archive, Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India*: "the house is the foundation for memory; for others, its courtyards, verandas, and stairways plot not just space but also familial relations, personalities, and the cycle of birth and death" (2003: 18). Such observations are apt in respect of my familial archive. Within the family home, by convention certain spaces are allocated to the women – the kitchen especially being the traditional women's domain. The kitchen is where a

woman performs the majority of her housely duties and thus spends the majority of her time. This is a constraint but, as I have already discussed, in relation to my own female family archive the kitchen has also become a refuge for these women, as it is a locale in which they seek and find quiet moments to stay in touch with each other via the letters they write. Much like the functional *voorskoot*/apron, the kitchen in my grandmother's home thus serves as a surrogate that can corroborate her life. When speaking to family members about my grandmother, their memories have her almost always remembered within the kitchen, *her* kitchen. There is one specific recollection of her in the kitchen that I would like to discuss. In this narrative, as recalled by my great aunt, the kitchen becomes the stage and setting that both triggers and holds memories of important and painful events in the lives of my mother and grandmother.

My mother became pregnant at the age of sixteen, and through the following description my great aunt gives of the day she found out about her niece's pregnancy the "hybrid assemblages of knowledge, instruments, vocabularies, and systems of judgement" (Rose, 2000: 322) as facilitated by and enacted within certain spaces, become visible. As this event takes place in the kitchen the space also becomes the physical connection with this memory; the surrogate that facilitates the memory of these secret exchanges also serves as the setting for these exchanges.

> Ek weet net ek het een oggend by V*** [my ouma] gekom… Dit was op 'n Donderdag oggend toe gaan ek by suster V*** aan… en toe ek so inkom by haar in die kombuis toe sit sy op haar hurke en pak die kas reg [sy onthou en verduidelik waar alles in die kombuis staan] want die borde het nog so gestaan, sy het mos altyd skoongemaak. En ek sien sy het gehuil en ek sê; "Nou hoekom het jy gehuil? Is jy hartseer?" "Ja", sê sy, "ek is hartseer" en sy gaan staan so voor die stoof, sy sit haar hande... toe sê sy, wag hoe het sy nou gesê dat ek nou mooi dink… "L** [my ma] verwag". Net so. Toe is sy [my ma] in Std9. En die middag het ek weer na hulle toe gegaan, toe L** uit die skool kom. Toe het ek met hulle gaan sit en gesels om die tafel, F*** [my oupa] was

nie by nie, toe het L** so langs my gesit, die streep baadjie - toe sê ek vir hulle dis nie die einde nie - aanvaar dit soos dit is. En toe het L** op haar hande gaan lê en sy het gesnik soos sy gehuil het en ek het haar so om haar skouers gevat.[65]

(Personal communication, Aug, 2009)

[65] Translation: I just know one morning I arrived at V***'s [my grandmother]… It was a Thursday morning and I stopped by V***... and when I came into the kitchen where she was she was squatting while organizing the cupboard. [She remembers and recalls where everything stood in the kitchen], because the plates were standing stacked, she was always cleaning. And I see she had been crying and I say; "But why were you crying? Are you sad?" "Yes" she says, "I am sad", and she goes to stand in front of the stove, puts her hands… and she says, wait how did she say it, let me think carefully… "L** [my mother] is expecting", just like that. She [my mother] was in Std. 9 [grade 11] at that time. And the afternoon I went to them again, when L** came out of school. Then I talked to them sitting around the [kitchen] table, F*** [my grandfather] wasn't with, then L** sat next to me, the striped blazer - then I told them it's not the end – accept it as it is. And then L** laid down on her hands and sobbed as she was crying and I put my hands around her shoulders.

morning

window

c
u
p mother
b hunched
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a plates|stacked
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sister v
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t mother
a daughter
b crying
l stripes
e touch
aunt

afternoon

In “Writing about Writing about Writing (About Writing)” Alison Mark refers to poems as “a transitional space,” which offer “the possibilities for many identifications”. Poems, she argues, “are of their nature liminal […] ‘the record of a series of individual thresholds of the experience of being conscious’” (2000: 68). The affective nature of the female family archive that I discuss has something of these qualities too, a generous and generative metaphoric porosity that enables space and place to serve as surrogates within the female archive. Indeed, this is a form of the poetics of elusive expression that is my goal throughout the dissertation, a means of granting that, instead of remaining only within the parameters of theoretical academic discussion, the honouring of a female archive requires me to discover alternative modes of expression, other ways of saying. Here, while I agree with Mark that poetry, because of its liminality, can serve as such an alternative mode, and I have freely turned to poetic discourse at moments in the dissertation, I have also pushed my poetics somewhat beyond the verbal in order to accommodate words as creative *visual* text or visual landscape. Thus the space of the conventional poem becomes liminal to a further degree.

Bleeding

The Bathroom

After my mother and father married when she was seventeen, they lived with my grandparents for three years. I ask my mother about the house she grew up in, and she speaks about the house; its interior, furnishings, objects, routines, events. In this narrative, the bathroom, specifically, serves as a foundation for recollection, a spatialised mode of surrogacy in which rooms and locales informally map family life, people, identities and events. This part of my female family narrative reveals not only the practices of silence around birth and death (as Burton observes occurred in the houses, homes and domestic histories of colonial India), but women’s menstrual cycles.

Central to this is a space that, except for the bedroom, is possibly the most undiscussed room of the house – the bathroom. This is not surprising.

Kristeva writes about excrement and menstruation as "polluting [...] they always relate to corporeal orifices as to so many landmarks parcelling-constituting the body's territory" (2002: 260). Because the bathroom is the space allocated to this so-called dirt, indeed serving as a distinctive, distinctly private remove for such functions, it is not a space within the home that features in polite family narratives, my own included. The unmentionable, improper space of the bathroom becomes the surrogate for the silenced events that happened there.

> Ma: En ja dit was nog in daai huis wat ek die miskraam gehad het… maar ek het nie geweet ek is swanger [met haar tweede kind] nie, dit was drie weke oor my tyd gewees en toe dink ek ek verwag nou seker… en toe dit nou begin, ek het my goed gevat, maar ek het vir niemand iets gesê nie, niemand het geweet nie, en gaan bad en toe, sien ek ek het nou daai tyd (kan ek maar praat al die goed?), 'n ou pad gedra nog en toe ek dit afhaal toe sien ek die iets wat daar lê jy weet, so 'n, 'n iets - jy weet 'n stukkie iets. En toe verskriklik pyn gehad ek het gedink ek word flou - tot ek al my goed bymekaar het en kon gaan bad, toe was dit baie erg die pyn ontsettend, en toe het ek instinktief gedink ek moet dit hou…[66] toe het ek dit gehou.
>
> Ek: Waar?
>
> M: Ek dink sommer in 'n sakkie daar in die badkamer, en toe in die bad geklim. En toe Pa[my pa] inkom by die badkamer deur, toe skrik hy hom vrek, want toe is die hele bad vol bloed - en ek het so half gesit, ek het nie agter gekom nie - maar toe is die water nou alles rooi. Toe het hy nou vir my gehelp, en my afgewas…[67]

[66] My mother's eldest sister and her husband were visiting for a few days; her brother-in-law was a medical doctor and she kept the tiny miscarried fetus to show him.

[67] Translation: Mother: And yes it was still in that house I had the miscarriage… but I didn't know I was pregnant [with her second child], it was three weeks over my time and I thought I was probably expecting… and when it started, I took my things (but I didn't tell anybody anything, nobody knew), and went to take a bath, and then I saw that I have that time, and see at that time I (can I talk about all these things?), I still wore a pad, and when I took it off

(Personal communication, March 2010)

In an article on girls, body mapping and gender at the end of childhood, Shirley Prendergast reminds us that "girls receive strong messages about the need for hygiene and secrecy" with the onset of menarche (2000: 113). These messages extend, she continues, into other areas of life, since girls "must manage all of these things unobtrusively, without calling attention to themselves. Most ironically, then, girls' last task is to forget and make invisible everything that they have done in order to accomplish this successfully" (2000: 117). This extreme secrecy characterises my mother's narrative, and is amplified because the narrative refers not only to the blood and pads associated with menstruation, but also to a miscarried foetus. In fact, my mother stops her testimony in order to ask me if the taboo subject matter of pads and menstruation is permissible in our discussion. Clearly, she was conscious of transgressing longstanding boundaries. In "Feminist Biography: the Pains, the Joys, the Dilemmas" Shulamit Reinharz suggests that "[m]odesty, a virtue urged on women, is a further impediment for biographers of women" and this concept of demure virtue hampered both my research and my mother's ability to tell her narrative (1994: 43). My mother's pause at the mention of a sanitary pad also highlights how rare and painfully precious it was for her to share the story around her miscarriage. Death in birth (miscarriage) and the possibility of conception (menstruation): these two forms of female blood archive merge and mingle, in being shared with me, her daughter.

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then I saw something was lying there, you know, such a, a something – you know a little piece of something. And then had a lot of pain, I thought I was going to faint – till I had all my things together and could go take a bath, then the pain was very bad, extreme pain and then I instinctively thought I should keep it… and then I kept it.
Me: Where?
Mother: I think just in a little bag there in the bathroom, and then climbed into the bath. And when Dad [my father] came in the bathroom door he was scared to death, because by then the entire tub was filled with blood – and I was just sort of sitting – I was not aware – but the water was all red. Then he helped me- washed me…

This important part of my mother's life surfaces within her discussion of her mother's house as it transpired within the bathroom. In this narrative the bathroom becomes a surrogate we may connect with the obscured, intimate events that took place there. The bathroom is a private, closeted place of bodily practices that are at once 'secret' and yet commonplace. The taboos around leaking fluids, waste and stench seem to override the necessary, everyday ordinariness of the site. The bathroom thus materialises as a place of the in-between, and none of the events that take place there, none of the objects that Kristeva mentions, is discarded and remains in the bathroom, whether excrement or blood or urine or mucous, all are carried away by networks of pipes. The bathroom is a form of passage through which the undesirable passes, and yet in this process the taboos of desire are also externalised, or at least made more visible. The bathroom is not habitually understood as an area of a dwelling where things are stored and kept, as tends to occur in the other rooms and areas of a house. The bathroom is a place for discarding yet within this narrative it becomes a site that, counter to conventional proprieties of withholding the improper, also *holds* onto something; it keeps something: this being the story of my mother's miscarriage. Though the blood drained from the bath tub, the events lingered in body and in memory, and became part of the family archive I now try to bring more fully into being.

When I think of my mother sitting in her own blood, not aware of my father entering the bathroom, not aware anymore of what was happening around her, I recall Grosz's comments. Grosz, referring to Roger Caillos, maintains that in a situation such as this, "the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his [her] skin and occupies the other side of his [her] senses. He [She] tries to look at *himself* [herself] from any point whatever in space. He [She] feels himself [herself] becoming space, *dark space where things cannot be put*" (1995: 90). Following Grosz – but also clumsily pushing her pronouns towards a female gendering more suited to my mother's story – I envision part of my mother exiting her body; part of herself dissolving, merging with the space around her, the secretive space of

the bathroom absorbing her. And though the bathroom was indeed a place where things could not be put, the events, pain that transpired in this room were retained within this space, so that the bathroom became a surrogate for the complex personal secrets of/in my mother's narrative. A cloakroom, as some cultures have it.[68]

Reflecting

The Bedroom

The web of tensions within the family homes that feature in/as my female family archive extends (unsurprisingly) to the bedroom. In *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* Foucault is astute in writing about such spatial-human relationships:

> Of course, one could attempt to describe these different emplacements, looking for the set of relations by which a particular emplacement might be defined. […] One could describe, through their web of relations, the emplacement of repose, closed or semi-closed, formed by the house, the room, the bed, and so on.
>
> (1998: 178)

From the sitting room in my grandmother's house, (a direct, more accurate, translation of 'sitkamer' than 'lounge'), there was a small hallway[69] that led to the bedrooms and bathroom. The hallway culminated in my grandmother's bedroom. From the hall you could see her dressing table and the window behind it. The light always shone a yellow white from the room – the light would move in the mirror where she did her make-up and hair –

[68] In the section 'a, b, c, e, w' in the accompanying book there are references to both the above segment as well as the segment 'Weeping, The Kitchen' (pp. 138-139).
[69] The events surrounding my grandfather's death my mother talks about when giving testimony in Chapter one happened in this small hallway while she was lying in her bed in the bedroom adjacent to the hallway. See Chapter one pg. 26.

and in the mirror the patterns of the glass bowl where she kept her jewellery were reflected.

In my fever to document and collect I would often spend time thinking about, and yearning for, that which I could not see or touch anymore, the places I could not return to. There is a satisfied longing, a relief, when I find this glimpse of my grandmother's bedroom in the background of a slide. The pang of the lost familiar is so strong. It is the light, the colour of the light that beckons its faint familiar traces of filtered sunshine and the slow shimmer of dust particles in the glow. For me this light is what Margaret Atwood speaks of in *Cat's Eye* when she writes of "[e]choes of light, shining out of the midst of nothing. It's old light, and there's not much of it. But it's enough to see by" (as cited in Cooke, 1992: 167). I see the partial glimpse of the room, illuminated by this dim light, and I am satisfied. It is enough. It is enough for me as writer to 'see by'. This photograph makes me feel, rather than know. My longing for presence is quenched.

Dying

The Bed

I spent a lot of time with my grandmother, especially in the last years of her life. During this time I photographed her quite often. Photographing someone at such an advanced age is very intrusive – there is an austere vulnerability to the act – and her body had become mended material; a wound of sorts, even though this wound had not broken the skin. Being with my grandmother in the last years of her life while she was losing her memories, her very self, is possibly one of the loudest absences that I have encountered in my research.

This absent wound that reverberates, festering from underneath the surface like a fever, affects me as the photographer and creator of the images as well as the subsequent viewer of the photographs. In the next specific scenario I will discuss my mother as the viewer and this absent wound pierces her violently and leaves me stricken with guilt.

While my grandmother was still alive I once photographed her bed after she turned it down in the morning – she always pulled back the bedding after she got up and opened the windows so that the bed could breathe after her night's rest, as though the bed needed to rest after the burden of carrying her in sleep for a night. She would then return later in the day and make up the bed more properly. I photographed her bed in this 'turned down' state. A while afterwards I showed my mother some of my photographs, the picture of my grandmother's bed among them. I thought nothing of it yet my mother was outraged and berated me. She said my photograph, and the act of photographing this subject, spoke disrespectfully. She said the image made it seem that my grandmother lived in dire circumstances and was neglected, abandoned by her relatives. I pointed out that the image merely showed her room and her bed as they always looked, early in any day, and remarked to my mother that she had never expressed these concerns before. My mother was not persuaded.

Grosz writes about the complicated links between thoughts, images and objects and how such connections can become problematic. She writes about the text as textile with interwoven modes that:

> scatter thoughts and images into different linkages or new alignments without necessarily destroying their materiality. [...] they produce unexpected intensities, peculiar sites of indifference, new connections with other objects, and thus generate affective and conceptual transformations that problematize, challenge, and move beyond existing intellectual and pragmatic frameworks.
>
> (1995: 126)

Such an understanding views the text as textile yet I want to attempt a canny inversion, and to apply this understanding by viewing the textile, my grandmother's bed, as text. This encounter with my mother is indeed in quite literal ways a different 'scattering of thoughts and images'; my grandmother's bed, and by extension the photograph of her bed, was a

textile site that generated innovative links and transformations, challenging and reconfiguring possible representation of a beloved relative. I recognised the bed as a representative surrogate of my grandmother, and thus I photographed the bed. The photograph in turn, at further remove, became a representative surrogate of my grandmother's age, ailing health and deteriorating memory. For my *mother*, the bare/d bed triggered feelings of neglect and anger, a reminder of her own mother's absence from the bed, the room and the photograph – and her imminent absence from her life.

In "Place and Landscape" Barbara Bender writes:

> There are occasions when we need to recognize that there are landscapes that are beyond words. We (academics) have a tendency to believe that one of our tasks is to explore the hidden depths of exploitation and contestation, and to create spaces for those that are silent/ silenced. But there may be times or contexts where people's memories, wound around particular places, are too raw, too private for the outsider to intrude upon [...] sometimes people may wish to stand witness [...] sometimes, after a lapse of time, people may feel the need to recollect, to bring out memories or mementoes that make possible a present-past [...] but sometimes it may be important to simply acknowledge the silent places, the places of absence.
>
> (2006: 310)

In photographing my grandmother at an advanced age, I too experienced a wounding of sorts, because she had begun to resemble the objects I had already started to keep as mementoes. She was already more like the mended aprons, than like her self. My actions referred ahead, to a time and place in which my grandmother would no longer be with us. For my mother, similarly, the bed as object became a site that spoke of my grandmother's absence that was already present even louder than her eventual permanent absence/death. Significantly, however frail my grandmother might have appeared in photographs I took of her, my mother never responded to any of

these images in the way she did to the image of the turned down bed. The image of this empty bed, carefully turned back as per my gran's daily habit, and thus bearing the marks of her habitual presence, spoke louder and struck harder in relation to my grandmother's approaching final loss, her death, than her decrepit physical and mental state did in the portraits I took of her. As Bender suggests, it might sometimes be important to acknowledge the silent places. I have acknowledged my grandmother's bed as depicted in the photograph I took of it; I admitted this to the text and by extension to you as reader. But I will not allow you to view the photograph. My grandmother's bed is a private place and I will let it remain so.

Laying

The Cemetery

For the women in my family the cemetery plays an important role in their lives. Foucault speaks of the cemetery as

> [A] different place compared with ordinary cultural spaces, and yet it is a space that is connected to all the other emplacements of the city or the society […] since every individual, every family happens to have relatives in the cemetery. […] each person began to have the right to his little box for his little personal decomposition […] the "other city" where each family possessed its dark dwelling.
>
> (1998: 180-181)

In my female family archive the cemetery as place holds more divergent connotations than merely a 'dark dwelling', yet it is, as Foucault asserts, 'connected to other emplacements'. In my interview with my great aunt she speaks about the cemetery:

> Ek was maar net altyd vreeslik bang vir spoke want ons het langs die kerkhof gebly… ons het elke Sondag op ons mense se grafte [blomme gaan sit]; want

> my oupa en ouma was in die ou kerkhof en Mammie en Aunt L** was nou weer in die nuwe kerkhof en jou oupa F***… en almal is nou daar… Ons het altyd Sondae deur die kerkhof geloop - dit was eintlik 'n gewoonte om deur te loop en die blomme op ons mense se grafte te sit en dan gaan ons onder uit by die hek en dan by die nuwe kerkhof ook deur.[70]
>
> (Personal communication, Aug, 2009)

My mother's older sisters stayed with their maternal grandmother in the afternoons, and because her house was next to the cemetery they played under the shady trees of the burial ground, walking and balancing on the cemetery walls – these are afternoons they remember very fondly. When I asked my mother's middle sister in conversations about the graveyard she described it as sad, especially when she thinks of her father's funeral, but she continues by describing a feeling of "…rustigheid om daar te verkeer, kontak en naby-gevoel met alle geliefdes wat daar rus. [Ek] voel lus om met hulle te gesels" (Personal communication, June, 2009).[71] My mother said that she spent as much time in the cemetery as in church. She recalls all the deceased family members they went to 'visit' every week, and for her this was a very normal and comforting routine practiced by the women in the family. Letter writing and keeping contact with family members was a task allocated to the women in my family and it seems that this task extended beyond death as it was the women who went to visit the deceased family members in the nearby graveyard. For my mother and her sisters, the cemetery is both a holy place of death, sadness, loss, and for some (like my great aunt) ghosts, yet it is also a tranquil place of reverence and connection

[70] Translation: I was just always afraid of ghosts because we lived next to the cemetery... every Sunday we put [flowers] on our people's graves: because my grandma and grandpa was in the old cemetery and Mommy and aunt L** was in the new cemetery and your grandpa F***… and everyone is there now… we always walked through the cemetery on Sundays – it was a ritual to walk though it and put the flowers on our people's graves and then we leave at the bottom through the gate and through the new cemetery as well.

[71] Translation: […] restfulness to be there, contact and feeling of closeness with all the loved ones that rest there. [I] feel like talking to them.

as well as a place of play and shelter, offering pleasurable respite from the harsh Karoo sun.

My female family archive, like the cemetery, is a place of convergence, a place where opposites co-exist. Indeed, it is a place *between* opposites, between life and death, inside and outside, familiar and unfamiliar, fear and assurance. Our archive is filled with little boxes for past lives, but I understand that if an archive is a grave place imbued with loss and decomposition it is *also* a place where we may compose ourselves and our representations of family members and stories. With all of the opposites that reside within the archive and the cemetery, both remain a place of family. Family remains at the core of so many contradictions.

When my grandmother spoke of the house she grew up in she would always start by reminding me where in the town it is and then she would say that the street name used to be 'Graf Straat' (Grave Street), but they changed it to 'Nuwe Straat' (New Street). My grandmother's family home, then, is located in a site of intersection officially nominated as variously old and new, associated with death and life, the place of the grave. In the same way this female archive is the place of absence and loss through the presence of spectral surrogates. As I have repeatedly said, our female archive is always both what we survive and how we survive.

Conclusion

In Chapter one, I located the private and interior archive. While manifesting this interior archive within and through my own family, I partially revealed and intimated the different ways in which trauma is manifested within the interior and private archive by looking at the testimony of three generations of women in my family. I aimed to reveal and investigate but at the same time bring the spectral being of a private and interior female archive to some form of expressive life.

In the first of the four chapters the act of testimony, the very speech act, is located in the archive yet what are crucial are the acts of non-speaking or unspeaking that are found at the centre of witnessing. The unsayable and unsaid is located at the core of the impossibility of giving testimony. The research text not only looks at the forgotten but also at the unremembered by concentrating on acts of evasion, omission and in-articulation, and my focus, as well as the text itself, moved from familiar descriptive language toward the poetics of a more visually-inflected 'non-language'.

Though the dissertation text moves away from and disrupts traditional repertoires of expressive language, it also looks at language in various forms. In this text there is a powerful interplay between the languages of Afrikaans and English. These different languages are used to demarcate different aspects of my female archive: in Chapter one these languages allow me to suggest the delineation of gender roles and aspects of family and society, and to imply that English and Afrikaans, in this archive, imply (whether at conscious and/or unconscious levels) the marking of trauma.[72]

Further, in Chapter one, the act of archiving is uncovered to include the act of forgetting, and I argue that the archive emits both a fear and a desire for forgetting, since to forget or 'not know' accommodates set regimes of both family and society, meaning that the female archive relieves and shelters the individual. Love is what makes family trauma complex, it makes it possible

[72] The relationship between these two languages plays a significant role in the second chapter as well.

and it hides it, making a variable network of victims, accomplices and survivors, and creating a need to speak in a different way than the more conventional narratives employed within the family.

We are bound to our earlier generations; we bear stains and shadows that we cannot escape. My interview with my mother was an interaction where the language of silence becomes shared – it becomes a generational act in which I take part. (The slippage of tense, here, does the necessary work of blurring past and present.) Through my participation and my silence my various roles in this study becomes highlighted; the question of the different emotional languages I speak also becomes important. One of these languages is the mother-daughter language and this is addressed in Chapter one in various ways, one of which was to create visual silences within the dialogue-cum-testimony. As my discussion indicates, I am unable to give testimony or I choose not to give testimony about the events my mother reveals to me, yet I still archive. In order to do so I chose to write in a more fragmentary form, a looser style and layout. Here, I explore various creative paths in the service of my archival project, rather than being an academic chaperone to the reader.

As a woman within this archive, as a daughter and granddaughter and niece, I have chosen to take part in this process in a searingly intimate way. By giving my own testimony of familial trauma as well I have also made decisions not to tell, not to speak, not to show. I do not know if these choices empower or diminish this research text for my reader; if they extend or compromise my project. But these are choices I stand by.

Chapter two reveals that the women in my family, in their capacity as surrogate witnesses bearing witness to the true witness, are never innocent. To various extents, they were spectators to Anne's demise and her eventual, official eradication. This makes them complicit. Yet without their compromised witnessing we might have absolutely no record or remembrance of Anne at all. Though the women complied with what the patriarch dictated, in secret they also sometimes defied him. For example,

through my grandmother, my great grandmother [Anne's mother] keeping contact with Anne and sending her clandestine parcels. To the best of their contextually-compromised ability, within that particular family narrative in the culture of the times, the women in my family could be said to have initiated the creation of the female archive. They found ways in which to exist under the given narrative, in the darkness of the lacunae of the unsayable and unsaid that filled, in its absence, so much of their lives.

Within the interactions with Anne's surrogates in Chapter two I realised that I was now functioning as a strong and 'proper' surrogate for Anne, as I bore witness to others' testimonies and not my own lived experience. I sensed that for some family members some of my actions and questions bordered on the improper, on an impropriety. The result, in my search for Anne, was that I was viewed in similar ways to her: as transgressor. I suggest that multiple acts of bearing witness and serving surrogacy need to take place in order to offer entrance to the unsaid and unsayable. Through the creative gathering of this female archive, I am able to offer information about a woman two generations removed from me, a woman I never met or had any interaction with. Anne is a woman whose name I only heard when I was an adult. Before that, it was as if she did not exist. Had never lived. What did her irrefutable existence yet simultaneous absence in my family history mean? My study has guided me towards exploratory answers that I have found in a strange combination of explicit account, that which remains unsaid, and the affective atmospheric backstory of gesture, glance, avoidance and hesitation. To my mind, Derrida's words ring true, when he claims the power of imprints that are left on "more than one skin at more than one age" (1995: 190).

None of these women as surrogate witnesses (defined and discussed in Chapter three and four) within my family has clean hands but at the same time we struggle within and with these generational aberrations by continuing to create an archive by weaving with this tapestry of tangled strands and their complex links. Though these strands are always inevitably also a web-like meshwork we are caught in, they are also that with which we

work, in new and alternative ways, to create a textile or tapestry in which our female voices can find variant, unconforming forms of expression that seek to give name to, and speak of, all aspects of our lives, including the traumatic. Yet, regretfully, such expression still never reaches a point where the family unit is exposed. To this day we, myself included, put the family collective before the individual, meaning that we tend to occlude the victim at the expense of the overarching traumatising structure. Here is where the female archive becomes significant, for we still only suffer within the realms of our archive – it is the only place where we can wail out loud, and make those noises beyond any language and representation that offers us a voice. While she never speaks expressly of this traumatic matter, for example, in the closed archive of her personal journal my mother feels free to write, to *speak*:

> Tot vandag toe kan ek nie verstaan dat 'n mens 'n geliefde van jou,
>
> bloed van jou bloed, so kan vergeet nie.
>
> So tot niet kan laat gaan. Vereensaam, alleen, verstote, verarm.
>
> Here help my dat ek dit nooit doen nie. Of weer doen nie? Dit was dan '*Anne*'
>
> …
>
> In my oë die grootste sonde wat gepleeg is deur die J***** Familie.
>
> My inkluis. [73]
>
> (Personal journal, 2007)

We continue to speak of such sins only in the female archives of journals, and not in the shared family narrative. The female family archive is what we survive and how we survive, yet we remain in a mode of survival, having to endure, suffer, tolerate and bear.

[73] Translation: Till this day I can't understand that one can forget a loved one, blood of your blood, like that. To let go to waste like that. Deserted, alone, rejected, impoverished. Lord help me to never do that. Or do it again? It was *Anne* … in my eyes the biggest sin committed by the J***** family. Myself included.

This is the abundant and beautiful burden of the women in my family – this knowledge we carry, and which enables us to imbue a collection of otherwise lost objects, spaces and people with life and meaning. As my dissertation has illustrated, objects inevitably carry the imprints of the lives impacted upon them, referring to and reflecting upon aspects of those lives. Yet some attempted imaginative link to the intangible interior archive of psyche, soul and thought is imperative in order to intimate and tentatively fathom the female archive more fully through both object relations and the felt yet also impalpable forces of feeling. In my own work, I contend that it is a female voice springing from the female interior that has the potential to give life to this archive. This female voice animates the archive by tracings and interactions and interrelationships within the archive through the synesthetic application of different modes of expression in order to enter the various layers of meaning and meaning-making in the female archive. I contend that in order for female archives to be found, founded and futured, it is necessary to listen for and to such female voices, and to hear such voices in the ambient fields of voiceless objects and spaces, which serve as surrogates that can attest to the potentially resounding soundings of this female voicing.

In Chapter three and four I continued the investigation of my female family archive by employing the concept of the surrogate, as a form of proxy or substitute, in order to describe how we interact with and use people, objects and spaces within my female family archive. The relationships generated by the reverberations that arise between body and object in space create and constantly recreate the myriad meanings through which we, as individuals and members within a family, mould our lives. Consequently there is a constant state of flux deep within the female family archive that becomes extraordinarily powerful in effecting affective links, yet these unsettling reverberations are also productively risky, because elusive; they produce resonances that threaten the familiar structures of all we hold dear as well as why we hold it dear. These relationships between a person and the various forms of materiality I designate as surrogates, which surround her,

or him, are the most difficult-to-access area of the archive to dwell in, and thus the richest.

While the complex relationships created between operating surrogates are elusive they are nevertheless able to endure, and in so doing to suggestively portray aspects of the unsayable and unsaid. The uncovering of these qualities once again reveals that this archive the women in my family create and perpetuate is simultaneously what, why and how we survive the trauma within our family.

It is within the realm of the surrogate that the alternative mode of expression I argue for became less opaque enabling me to move from an analytical, philosophically-dense text toward literary approaches through poetic interventions that disturb, unsettle and partially shatter the text in order for the text to 'mean' in ways other than that of familiar representational, descriptive language. I ventured not so much beyond theory but rather into the areas in-between different disciplines of academic theory, creating a movement beyond the known to a text that is certain in its uncertainty in language. The academic work further departs from the traditional and known correlations of language and sign into the artist's book, where I offer an affective, ephemerally expressive approach, that employ contradictory yet complementary impulses of both unity and dispersion, to the challenges of my female archive. The accompanying book serves as a place of alternative expression an/other element of both archival and creative academic practice. In the dissertation as well as the book recurring sub-themes and metaphors facilitate synesthetic movement among the modes of expression and archival practice within my female family archive.

These methods and adaptations are not meant to provoke chaos. Instead, they are an extended feature of the female archive, this female archive that serves to shatter and seize language and the conceptions, practices, functions and nature of the traditional archive in order for the ancient methods of expression, beyond the sphere of language, to operate and be

observed. Following scholars like Kristeva and Cixous, my study links the female archive to a prior point of origin that exists before and beyond language, implying that this archive, abandoned and marginalised as it might be, is not only much older than the conventional archive of recorded History, but richer and superior. Because the female archive is more fragile and ephemeral, existing less self-evidently in the everyday lives of these women rather than being held in the designated official archives, it is not easily 'located' and thus not easily targeted. Thus I argue that the female archive cannot be destroyed in the ways traditional archives are vulnerable to being destroyed.

My research locates this prior place of origin as the mother's body and of the mother's body – implying that crucial forms of female archive exist in (and *as*) women's bodies and minds, and in our relationships to and with people, spaces and things, all of these accumulating through the repeated practices of everyday lives. Because such small projects of everyday femaleness and the often unthought, routinized practices of domesticity that create and sustain 'the family' are considered unimportant constituents of an archive, such archives risk being lost if they are not recognised. Unlike in traditional archives, where strategic handling is a mandatory, but also monitored, apparatus implemented to achieve the purposes of the archive, in the interior and female archive it is the practice of touching that is invisibly archived. In order to recognise the female archive and facilitate the ongoing liveliness of a culture's future, the act, and nonverbal practice, of archiving for the purpose of touching is pivotal to my study. In order to achieve this a means through which to archive the tangible act and experience of touching, which often leaves sensations rather than traces, is needed. Thus I introduce the elusive contrariness of the haptic which involves reaching into the prolific yet potentially hostile possibilities of a communication that is nonverbal. This entails viscerally comprehending touch as the physical inter-act-ion between body and body, and between object and space, as such instances of touch *are* registered – but not in ways that fit with traditional concepts of language and archive. In regards to the creation of

the female archive these tactile interrelations become a way of moving beyond the limits of traditional expression.

The archive is a creative inheritance which always entails both a pleasure and a burden; this inheritance exists as a body of traces between the women in my family. Such traces take the shape of various processes of experiential exchange between women in a female lineage that create delicate, complex exchanges which layer theory with the quotidian. Such embodied processes consist of experiential modes that required the self-reflexive linguistic-conceptual methods I applied within this study as well as my varied approaches in the artist's book. For this study I sought to locate and express this elusive archive I have inherited by creating a text within language drawing on academic theory. These avenues were not available to the women in my family, yet these women cannot be disregarded because they were not afforded the opportunities my education has offered me – the body of traces they inherit and create can and should still be viewed as texts. The women in my family have an impulse to archive that is expressed in the surrogates, both as object and practice, they create specifically when faced with loss and the fear of loss. The archive becomes a layering of physical surfaces as substitute for the person we wish to touch and interact with. This archive is both where and how we re-enact modes of touching – the physical surrogates we create serve as mediums through which we strive to mediate the abundance of complex emotions produced by loss and absence.

My exchanges with both the physical and oral aspects of my female family archive have brought me to the understanding that the fear of loss creates a fever, and this fever serves as a powerful drive to create and perpetuate the female archive. I have also observed that with the creation of this archive another fear is birthed – the fear of losing the archive itself. This often appears to be more acute because we are dealing with archival bodies of feeling, and surrogacy, rather than conventional physical archives. I also realised that for the women in my family their archiving does not manifest through traditional archival practices or forms; the things chosen as worth

keeping are not inherently valuable or typically precious, and nor is the manner in which they are kept traditional, in an archival sense.

Even though these women were unaware that their everyday practices and subsequent creation of surrogates, both inadvertently and deliberate, would be viewed as the intricately-related workings of an archive, this does not diminish the weight of their actions. This female archive is not simply accidental and should not be treated as mere happenstance as this risks further dismissal of these women's already marginal lives. If the archive of women in their roles as wife and mother within the domestic realm (identities that have historically been deemed unworthy of any status or study), is not considered and investigated in its own right these archives as well as archival studies will suffer greatly. Not only is the female archive in need of, and worthy of, attention it offers rich new avenues for academic, literary and artistic exploration exactly because it operates in modes different from the norms of accepted archival practices that challenge and often negates traditional approaches. Thus my research joins, and wish to contribute to, various scholarship that focus on the obscure, seemingly mundane and uneventful, lives of women, as rich repositories to mine for cultural and historical studies.

I come to the end of writing this text. In my gathering of this archive, I have encountered the curious recurrence of a surrogate creating its 'own surrogates' in a sense, and this is an apt metaphor for our archive. Let me leave you a parting glance: on my grandmother's dining room table, the family album came to life – individual portraits; group portraits, raised in their rectangular frames. The familiar family groupings had been exhibited in the same order, in the same places, on the same red table cloth, for as long as I could remember. The Karoo sun is merciless. Every afternoon, when the sun scorched most brutally through the dining room windows, Grandma would turn all the photographs face-down to protect the images from the light, light being both their source of origin and their potential annihilation. After her death, the photographs that stood on this cloth for all those years, facing the light, and turned from the light, have gone,

distributed to those who people the images. But I keep the red table cloth. I have become the keeper of the red cloth. This text/ile has become a moving surrogate. For on the table cloth is a strange pattern of rectangular shapes, the material here a darker red than on the rest of the faded fabric. The markers of the missing frames and (in turn) of the absent family members. The shadows of the photographs have been burned into the cloth. The shapes resembling gravestones. The tablecloth has become a small graveyard. Lives lived, lives gone, in the same light that created these shadows. But because of these objects as surrogate status, as opposed to the flux of the lives lived around them, they have made a true mark. Marks slowly rendered through time, made part of the fabric of the everyday, and a surrogate for the departures that were to come. The table cloth is thus also a photograph, the series of empty rectangular frames being imprints rendered by light. This light writing, a 'photograph' of textile rather than paper, is the alternative expression of our female archive, where the surrogates we create render their own expressions.

My female family archive: written with light on red thread.

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